[illegible] Royal · 1827

GERALDWOOD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

VILLEROY, AND SIGISMAR.

VOL III.

" I left no calling for this idle trade,
" No duty broke.——"

POPE.

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GERALDWOOD.

CHAP. XXI.

AT this instant Lady Georgina entered the room; and, after contemplating them for a moment, said, "Very well—mighty well, upon my honour. A good fire, and a good breakfast, are vastly comfortable things, I acknowledge; but, Mr. Doctor, I cannot help thinking you might have spared time to have, at least, sent an answer to my message, if it was too much trouble to come yourself."

"The Lady Georgina has either dreamed," replied Doctor Mirvan, "or the bearer of her behests is unworthy such high honour—no message, or intimation of one, having reached me. I

was this morning at your door, but all within being silent, I was sure you slept, and thought it pity to disturb you."

"And you, too, Geraldwood," observed her Ladyship, "were fearful of disturbing me; no wonder, indeed—you left me so exceedingly comfortable—so much at my ease, it would have been cruel—very cruel."

Geraldwood, from whose recollection the sight of the Marquis had completely driven both her friend and her message, attempted to excuse herself by saying, she had found Doctor Mirvan going to his breakfast, and she thought it pity to disturb him.

"Sweet, humane souls, you both are," interrupted Georgina, "and perfectly disinterested, as your present employment fully testifies.—You, my most attentive physician, fearing to disturb me—sit down and eat your breakfast—and you, my equally attentive friend, fearing to disturb

disturb him, sit down and eat your's!—Oh, thou kindred spirits, how I envy you your enjoyments—they are the gratifications of *early* taste!"

"Let *your* abilities no longer lay dormant," returned her uncle, presenting her a plate of muffin, "and I stake my credit on your shortly having nothing to envy; on the contrary, I feel convinced, that your performance will discover more taste, and in less time, than our united efforts have produced."

Here a servant entered, to say, their Graces were in the breakfast-room.

"That is unlucky," said the doctor, looking at his niece, who was filling out a dish of chocolate.

"I should think it truly so," replied her Ladyship, "if, when there, I was to be deprived either of implements, or the power of using them; as I feel something within me, which urges me to action."

 As

As they left the room, Doctor Mirvan bade Geraldwood recollect, that he should remain, for some time, where he then was, to hear from her own lips, the result of their competitor's activity and perseverance. This she understood, as it was really meant, to remind her of his readiness to know in what manner he could serve her; but she had already experienced the danger of his goodness, and determined not to hazard another interview, lest the secret of her marriage should be torn from her.

They found the Marquis and his parents conversing on some matters respecting his departure, which was the first intimation his sister had received, of either it, or the increased danger of Lord John. She affectionately loved her brothers, and alternately lamented their absence, and the cause of it, until the announcing of

Mr.

Mr. Delville, made her hurry from the apartment, to conceal her emotion.

The topics of the morning were now discussed by their Graces, and their visitor—the Marquis and his bride preserving a profound silence; at length, the Duke withdrew, and shortly after, the Duchess, telling her son, as she left the room, that she was certain Mr. Delville would deem his early departure a sufficient apology for leaving him with Miss Orphan. He rose from his seat, but meeting the eyes of Geraldwood, whose look at once bespoke wretchedness and entreaty, he resumed it, and commenced a conversation, but of a nature too confused and distrait, to have admitted a serious reply, had he allowed time for it; but this was not the case, as he hurried from one subject to another, with as much rapidity as though he had fore-

boded that some calamity awaited the first pause.

Mr. Delville, for some time, was politely attentive; at length, his patience became exhausted—he spoke to Geraldwood—looked at his watch—stood up—put on his gloves—took them off—and sat down again. Still the Marquis talked on, till Mr. Delville was inclined to believe him mad. Of this, he almost became persuaded, by comparing his present conduct with that he had observed on the preceding evening, when he never spoke at all, but sat absorbed in melancholy, and appeared to labour under some dreadful evil. In this idea he would, probably, have remained, had he not caught his eyes, directed, first to our heroine, and then towards the door, immediately after which, she was leaving the room.

He now conceived his Lordship had

brought home the famous university trick of quizzing; and, resolving to afford him no further sport, respectfully took the hand of his mistress, and entreated she would honour him with a few moments conversation in private; then turning to the Marquis, he continued. "I am afraid I have detained your Lordship, but will not further intrude upon your time, which must be precious; I wish to say a few words to Miss Orphan, and will, with your permission, take this opportunity."

The Marquis, after a short hesitation, retired in extreme anxiety, and rushing into the library, where sat his uncle, in expectation of Geraldwood's return, threw himself upon a sopha; and, pressing his forehead violently with his hand, exclaimed, "By Heaven, I shall go distracted!"

Doctor Mirvan, whom he had not observed, was on the point of inquiring the

the cause of his uneasiness, when he left the apartment with the same precipitation he had entered it; and meeting the Earl of Belmont in the hall, whom a servant was conducting to the Duchess, he assured his Lordship, he would find her Grace in the breakfast-room; into which he was accordingly ushered, to the great annoyance of Mr. Delville; and the as great relief of our heroine, who had listened in silence and dismay to the most ardent protestations of unalterable love. She had felt the necessity of some reply, but her ideas were too confused to allow her to determine of what nature it should be; she, therefore, eagerly caught at this opportunity of escaping, under the pretence of acquainting her Grace of his Lordship's visit, and her chagrined lover shortly after, followed her example.

The Earl had now time to recover from the trepidation, which he never failed to

experience

experience at the sight of his grand-daughter, for that he believed her to be such, from the first moment of his discovering her sleeping in the park, my readers will have anticipated; and it will not here be amiss to make them acquainted with the cause of his unnatural conduct to a being, whom, had she not interfered with his interest, he would have felt proud to acknowledge.

A relation of the former Lady Belmont had, by her last will, bequeathed a very large sum of money to Lady Jane Felix, which was to descend to her children; but, in the event of her Ladyship's dying without an heir, before her father, the whole was to devolve to him—to be at his disposal. Had not his circumstances been so embarrassed as they were, he would have stopped at few things to obtain possession of so considerable an acquisition; but, in their present state,

no difficulty was too great to encounter, nor any artifice beneath him to practise, which could contribute to so desirable an end. This feeling, or rather this want of feeling had rendered him insensible to the sufferings of his ill-fated daughter, whose never-ceasing regret for the loss of her child, would have affected an heart which was not dead to the afflictions of humanity. On her father, her regrets, her self-upbraidings, or her eager solicitude had no effect, save what arose from the probability that their excess would assist him to the early possession of her long-coveted wealth.

Thus situated, and thus feeling, it is not to be supposed, his discovery of the rightful heir afforded him satisfaction; on the contrary, it filled his bosom with disappointment and hatred. The single consolation which was left him, was derived from the abject state of the little

innocent,

innocent, whose unfriended, unprotected infancy, seemed to promise a life of ignorance, and obscurity. He, however, determined to keep her in view, that he might be prepared to counteract any effect of chance, which threatened her arriving at the knowledge of her birth.

Her growing influence in the Duke's family, had given him the most lively uneasiness; and he was plotting in what manner to separate her from it, when her Grace's sudden departure for Italy rendered his contrivances abortive. In the distance of the object, he forgot his danger, and looked forward to the death of Lady Jane as the prelude of his happiness. From this contemplation he was rouzed by the unlimited encomiums which were in every company bestowed on the protegée of the Duchess of M——, which led him to discover who was this wonder of nature; when, to his utter astonish-

 ment,

ment, and entire confusion, he learned that the accomplished, the beautiful Miss Orphan, was no other than the little ricketty, deformed, neglected child, whose desolate prospects had wrapped him in security. From that moment he determined on her removal, either by stratagem or force, as occasion should prompt.

Thus disposed, he gladly seized the opportunity afforded him by the duel; when, as we have already seen, he used his weapons so artfully, as not only to sink the object of his fears in her Grace's estimation, but to render her suspected, and dreaded, both by her and the Duke. Having so far succeeded in his first attack, he patiently waited an opening for a second, when the speedy marriage of Miss Orphan with Mr. Delville was announced to him, and threatened the overthrow of his present prospects, if

not of his future hopes. Mr. Delville was, on earth, the man he would the last have chosen to make a tool of;—he was spirited, generous, and difficult to be imposed on; therefore, to separate him from the object of his affections, without good cause, would be impossible. On the other hand, he was rich—of high birth—and not without vanity. His beautiful wife would be displayed; and although fortune had hitherto befriended him, by preventing a meeting between her and any of his near relations, or familiar friends, it might not, nay, could not, be always equally kind; and her likeness to her still remembered mother, was too strong not to occasion remark—remark would beget enquiry, and he shuddered to think what that enquiry might produce.

Thus circumstanced, there was no time for deliberation; he had, therefore, com-

missioned

missioned his myrmidons to watch their opportunity, and bear her away by force; but a discovery which he had that morning made, though it took nothing from the necessity of placing her in obscurity, rendered the immediate execution of less consequence. This discovery was no other than the marriage of the Marquis with his intended victim, to which chance had made him a witness. After a sleepless night, the result of his evil thoughts, he had walked forth in search of the confident of his project, in the hope it had already been successful, when he observed Mr. Daniel, whom he had known as tutor to the Duke of M——'s sons, enter the church. His heart throbbed at the sight, as he entertained not a doubt (though he wondered at the privacy) of his business there, being to unite the hands of Miss Orphan and Mr. Delville. A moment after, a couple followed, who seemed

seemed to fear observation. Geraldwood he recognized, but of her companion he could form no conjecture, being certain it was not the man he so much dreaded, and for whom report had designed her. Earnest to satisfy his curiosity, he tried the private door, through which they had been admitted, and finding it unfastened, he proceeded softly to the gallery, where he remained undiscovered, except by his grand-daughter, whose view had been so imperfect as to leave her in doubt, whether the object had been real or imaginary; nor was it, until the ceremony was compleated, and they were quitting the church, that he had been able to ascertain the person of the bridegroom, the Marquis being wrapped in a loose coat, and having stood with his back to him, during its performance. The gratification of his curiosity was death to his hopes, and he returned to his house, re-

pining

pining at fate, and execrating fortune, which he thought had now destroyed his most distant prospect of success.

Impelled, however, by an unquiet spirit, a sort of desperation, he repaired to the Duke's, where appearances soon gave him reason to hope that all was not yet lost. The wild, agitated manner of the Marquis, forcing him into the room where Mr. Delville and Geraldwood were, with the evident vexation of the first, and hasty retreat of the latter, instantly convinced him that the marriage had not only been a stolen one, but was intended to remain concealed; which, at least, gave him time; and what might not time effect?

Cheered by this cordial, he met her Grace with smiles, congratulating her on the removal of her, or rather his own groundless apprehensions, by the marriage of her protegée. Her Grace thanked

thanked him, but assured him their apprehensions had been far from groundless, as nothing but the extreme resolution she had exerted on the occasion, had prevailed with the young madam to accept Mr. Delville as her husband.

The Earl appeared astonished—affected to consider deeply—then asked if she really had not any knowledge of this girl's parents? The Duchess averred she had not. He again mused; then inquired, "What, my dear Lady, was your motive for prevailing with his Grace to retain her in his family?"

"My Lord, I did not—it was his own decision."

"Indeed! But, surely, not without your concurrence."

"It was not asked: but your Lordship means something by these questions—speak freely, I beseech?"

"No, my dear Lady—I—I only

wished

wished—that is—But, bless me! I did not think it had been so late."

"Nay, my good Lord, you cannot blind me—I see too plainly that you know more of this girl than you will acknowledge—and I estimate your friendship accordingly."

"Your Grace does me wrong; I protest that I am ignorant of every thing respecting her, yet thus urged, I must confess I have never thought her the low-born creature you have conceived her to be. There has ever been a peculiar something—a sort of inborn dignity about her, above the child of a plebeian father. Were she the daughter of a Duke, she could not appear more naturally graceful."

It was now her Grace's turn to muse, while the Earl continued: "I really believe she is the natural child of some man of fashion; and I think it not impossible

but

but your Lord may have known and esteemed her father. Yet, that cannot be, for I think you told me he did not greatly object to her marriage with your son."

"Pardon me, my Lord—I told you he was immoderately shocked at the idea. He said such a connection would be unnatural."

"Did, indeed, his Grace say it would be unnatural?"

"Those were his words—and they were the truth. Oh! Lord Belmont, how have I been imposed on! But it is not too late—I will this instant upbraid him with my wrongs."

"Dearest Lady, do not be guided by appearances, which, I unwillingly confess, are on your side, and would warrant the most decided conduct; but a moment's calm reflection will convince you of the small utility, and great uneasiness,

which

which would attend your making this business public; the world, so far from entering into your feelings, would ridicule them; his Grace, too, should the case actually be as you suspect, will certainly deny it—and where is your proof?"

"Would your Lordship, then, advise me quietly to bear so gross an insult?"

"I would, indeed, my ever-valued friend; the girl is on the point of marriage—let it take place, and you are rid of her, without any disturbance in your family. But whilst I offer this advice, let me be understood as speaking to her present situation; had she not received this offer of marriage, or had she persevered in her rejection, my advice would then have been, to place her, without loss of time, in some distant and obscure situation: such as, at all events, will be more suitable to her birth, than basking in the sun-shine of your Grace's favour."

"Would

"Would not the Duke have opposed such a removal?"

"I do not think he would, when so cogent a motive as his son's attachment was urged; had he known your suspicions, indeed, the case had differed widely. He might choose to defend what he could no longer conceal."

"You are right, my best friend, I see you are perfectly right—he must remain ignorant of our discovery."

"I fear it is the only way to preserve your Grace's influence over him—a consciousness that we are not what we seem, frequently inspires a humility which forsakes us when we have nothing more to fear."

"I see it all, my friend; and, from this moment, submit to your superior judgment. But for you, I should have continued to foster this serpent; yet, whilst I am ashamed of my own blindness, I cannot

not help wishing to know what led you to suspect this imposture."

"A number of combining circumstances: amongst others, a peculiar cast of countenance.—Did a resemblance to the Duke's family never strike your Grace?"

"I cannot say there did; but I have often said, and so have many others, that she might almost pass for your Lordship's daughter, Lady Jane, before she married that savage, Twaddle."

The Earl was here seized with a violent fit of coughing, which occasioned him to hold his handkerchief to his face; and which continuing troublesome, he took his leave, and the Duchess retired, to acquire that command of her temper, which she felt was necessary to the retaining her important secret.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

On Geraldwood's leaving Mr. Delville, she had been met by the Marquis, who, accompanying her to her dressing-room, informed her of his determination, previous to his departure, to acquaint his father with their marriage; feeling it impossible to leave her exposed to the addresses of Mr. Delville. His terrified wife sunk on her knees, conjuring him, in pity to her senses, to refrain doing what must destroy them both. She entreated he would depart in peace, and not add to the difficulties under which she already laboured.

He replied, that it was his resolution to

to relieve her from those difficulties, which, he foresaw, would be greater than her spirits could support.

She assured him, she had not any fears; would he but leave her to pursue the line of conduct she had laid down for herself, all would be well.

Her extreme agitation, with the almost phrenzied entreaty for forbearance, joined to the positive assurance that it was necessary to her peace, forced him reluctantly to recede from his intention, but, in his turn, he became the supplicant, beseeching her, should her present hopes not be realized, to give him instant information, when he would brave every danger which could accrue from his returning, and claiming her as his wife. Then, pressing her fondly to his bosom, he bade her recollect, that she would shortly be summoned to dinner, immediately after which he should depart, for which she must arm

herself

herself with all her fortitude.—Too keenly she felt the necessity of this precaution to neglect it.

At the summons of the dinner-bell, she descended. The family were assembled, with no other company than Mr. Delville, who conducted her to the eating-room, and seating her, placed himself beside her.

The conversation was heavy.—No one seemed in spirits.—The dejected manner, and pallid cheek of Geraldwood, disturbed her lover:—his attentions distressed her husband:—the Duchess was sullen—cold to the Duke—and formal to her late favourite, between whom she now perceived a most uncommon resemblance. Doctor Mirvan appeared thoughtful—even Lady Georgina was grave and silent, and his Grace was seldom otherwise.

Shortly after the cloth had been removed, the Marquis's equipage was announced.

nounced. He rose, respectfully saluted his mother, and bowed upon the hand of his father; then pressed the weeping Georgina to his bosom with the fondest affection—awkwardly accepted the offered hand and good wishes of his rival—and trembling, turned to Geraldwood. She had risen to receive him;—he took her hand—its death-like coldness alarmed him;—with a faltering voice, he requested she would bear him in her memory.

She breathed a deep sigh, and fell back upon her chair.

The instant interference of his uncle prevented his betraying the secret of his unlimited affection; he had sunk upon his knee, and supported her in his arms; but the Doctor, withdrawing him, gave her to his niece's care, saying she would know best what to do with her, and took his arm within his, remarking, that their longer stay would only increase the pain of

of parting; he then led him away, and they commenced their journey, the moment that the Marquis was assured of Miss Orphan's recovery, his uncle having promised to accompany him as far as Harwich.

Geraldwood had been conveyed to her apartment, whither she had been followed by the Duchess; who, finding her sufficiently recovered to sit up, desired, in a tone which seemed to say she would not be refused, her appearance at tea.

She accordingly attended; and shortly after it was over, found herself, once more, alone with her lover, whom she had, from the first, determined to undeceive, respecting her sentiments. She thought him injured, by being kept in ignorance of them so long; and, summoning all her resolution to her aid, was preparing to address him, when he prevented her by saying, "May I be permitted to hope, that

that my adored Miss Orphan looks forward to the solemnity of to-morrow, with some degree of that delight, which animates the bosom of her Delville."

At the word solemnity, she started—it forcibly reminded her of that of the morning, in which she had performed so principal a part. This suggesting to her the impropriety of her present situation, she hastily withdrew the hand which he had taken, and rose precipitately from her seat; but, recollecting herself, she returned to it, and burst into tears.

He contemplated her, for some moments, in silence; at length, he said, "Miss Orphan, from the first offer of my hand, to the present moment, I have observed something in your manner, which my reason would have told me was dislike, had not my self-love preferred ascribing it to timidity: that self-love is alarmed by your present conduct. Will

you,

you, therefore, by your decision, either restore it to its wonted consequence, or destroy it for ever? Am I the man of your unbiassed choice? In my union with you, I look for happiness; but, to constitute mine, your's must also be insured. Your person, without your heart, I shall not hold in any estimation; let me, therefore, entreat you, to be ingenuous. For though your words should be such as to annihilate the dearest hopes of my heart, even that will be less dreadful than the too late knowledge, that my gratification has been purchased at the expence of your peace."

She felt encouraged by this address; and, without hesitation, assured him, how greatly she esteemed herself honoured by the choice he had made, though she should ever feel the most poignant regret, should it prove the cause of uneasiness to him; more particularly, as her criminal

silence had led him to form hopes, which she now felt the necessity of destroying. She confessed, that previous to her acquaintance with him, her heart had been irrevocably given to another; that, sensible of his worth, she had endeavoured to regain it, in the hope that, when healed and made whole, it might still prove not undeserving his acceptance; but her efforts had been fruitless, and she saw herself compelled to reject the society and protection of a man, who would never cease to be the object of her gratitude, esteem, and veneration.

He conjured her to forbear, nor add to the distress which he already experienced, by increasing his value of the gem he was ever doomed to lament the loss of. He paused a moment, and then proceeded. "After the candour of your declaration, Miss Orphan, it would be presumption to hope for any immediate change

change in your sentiments, and ungenerous in me to urge you farther on the subject. I shall, therefore, only beg permission to assure you, that your rejection has in no degree lessened the affection which I bear you, and which I feel will ever continue to actuate each principle of my heart. My sentiments, I am confident, can know no change. Should it prove otherwise with your's, may I be permitted to build so far upon the declared good opinion which you now honour me with, as to once more lay my heart and fortune at your feet."

She attempted to speak, but he proceeded:

"Do not, dear Miss Orphan, forbid me; this hope will, at least, deprive some hours of a part of their extreme bitterness. Suffer me to tint my clouded prospects with this one faint ray of light —say, should the present object of your

affections cease to be such, may I not be permitted to prove how ardently, how unremittingly I have loved you?"

"Impossible, Sir; it is impossible—my fate is fixed. Circumstances which have lately occurred, leave me no longer mistress of my actions—I cannot be explicit, Mr. Delville; yet, be assured, I deem myself unfortunate in being compelled to forego the honour of your protection. Suffer me to leave you, Sir, for the present. I would entreat another favour, but that I fear to tax your generosity."

"Command me, dear Miss Orphan, now, and ever, command me; it will convince me you can esteem, though you cannot love me."

"I would request you to inform my patroness of the result of this conference, which I know will exceedingly displease her; and I own I have not courage to meet the first effusions of her resentment."

He

He promised to do it immediately; and left her, deeply affected by the pain which she had been compelled to inflict.

Shutting herself in her apartment, she desired her woman, if she should be inquired for, to say she had a violent head-ach, and was gone to bed; but before any questions had been asked, a letter from Mr. Delville was delivered to her Grace. It contained his most grateful acknowledgments for the interest she had condescended to take in his happiness; and lamented the severity of his destiny, which had rendered them ineffectual by the previous engagement of Miss Orphan's heart; the candour of whose confession he greatly applauded, and expressed the highest admiration of the delicacy and feeling with which she had conveyed her sentiments to him.

The Duchess read the letter with amazement, which giving way to rage,

she violently rang the bell, and commanded Geraldwood Orphan to appear before her.

The message left by Geraldwood was now delivered, and replied to by a repetition of the command. Lady Georgina was present, and beheld with astonishment the extreme perturbation of her mother, whom she had never before seen so agitated. She entreated to know the cause, and was briefly informed of the rejection of Mr. Delville. Her Ladyship, who saw nothing in this to vex any one but the rejected man, did not immediately reply, believing that something befitting such resentment was to follow; but finding that nothing more was added, she said, she wondered what could make her Grace so angry. For her own part, she was heartily glad that her friend had at last gained courage to do as she ought at first to have done, for she was sure it must

be

be very shocking to marry a man one did not like; and it was certainly very natural to refuse him. The Duchess, darting at her a look full of rebuke, bade her be silent, if she could not talk better sense.

"Foolish girl," she continued, "you are ignorant of the artifices of this wretch, whom we have fostered in our bosoms—she is in love with your brother, and has discarded Mr. Delville, in the hope of becoming his wife. Now you cease to wonder at my anger."

Her Ladyship, who thought that wishing to become the wife of the man she loved, was likewise very natural, felt far from convinced, and was on the point of declaring her want of conviction, when the culprit made her appearance, in some trepidation, though very far from imagining the extent of her Grace's wrath.

 On

On entering the room, she submissively said, she hoped her ever indulgent benefactress would pardon the step she had taken of dismissing Mr. Delville, without her permission; but that she had felt it impossible to render him happy or be so herself. She now sat down, when the Duchess haughtily commanded her to rise, and henceforward learn to keep the proper distance from her superiors. Geraldwood hastily rose, though doubting if she had rightly heard. Georgina likewise got up, and putting on a prim look, placed herself by the side of her friend. Her Grace bade her sit down. She replied, "Very willingly, mama; I only wish you would know your own mind, as it is very tiresome to be getting up and sitting down, so often."

She was now commanded to leave the room; but not obeying, the command was sternly repeated, and, at last, indig-

nantly

nantly complied with by her Ladyship; first telling Geraldwood to make haste and get her lesson, as she wanted to hear what she had said to her ci-devant lover —and what the poor soul had said to her.

She had no sooner closed the door, than her Grace, assuming a dignified air, proceeded to recount the manner in which the trembling auditress had been stolen into her family—the unparalleled kindness with which she had been treated—and the ingratitude with which she had repaid such wonderous obligations. First, by the unpardonable presumption of engaging the affections of a man so incalculably her superior; and secondly, by refusing to obey her command, to accept the one she had thought proper to approve. The hapless object of her bounty presumed not to reply. Overwhelmed by the consciousness that what her benefactress had alledged was far short of her offence,

fence, she waited in silence the result of her detail, which was for her to retire immediately to bed, without seeing, or having any correspondence with Lady Georgina, or any other person, until she gave permission. This sentence was milder than she had expected; and she retired with a heart somewhat less depressed.

Finding her friend waiting in her room, she informed her of the command she had received, and to which she had promised submission. Georgina replied, that the promise was already broken—that it was one not in her power to keep, inasmuch as it depended not upon her own will, but on that of others, whether she would or would not see them, consequently must be null and void—that by following the honourable profession of a listener, she had both heard the promise exacted, and agreed to, which had led

to

to the determination of placing the forbidden fruit full in her view, just to convince two such wise heads, how ridiculous such promises were.

An order from her Grace, for her daughter to retire instantly to her own apartment, compelled their separation; and Geraldwood, exhausted by the various anxieties which the day had produced, soon forgot her cares in a profound sleep, in which she continued until five in the morning, when she was awakened by a voice, pronouncing her name, and she discovered the Duchess standing at her bed-side.

Alarmed by such a phenomenon, she started up, crying, "Good Heavens! Lady Georgina is dying—let me fly to her."

She had nearly quitted the bed, when her Grace preventing her, bade her be composed, and listen to her, her friend

being

being perfectly well. She replaced herself, but trembled excessively, while her late benefactress proceeded to inform her, that the Duke, incensed at her refusal of Mr. Delville, and convinced of her pernicious designs upon Lord John Walsingham, had commanded her instant removal from his house and protection; in consequence of which, she must rise, and prepare for her immediate departure, a chaise now waiting to convey her to a friend of hers, who would treat her as her future conduct should merit.—That a change of linen would be all that would be necessary; as, should the Duke continue to desire her absence, such cloaths as she should stand in need of, would be forwarded to her. Then urging her to use expedition, she placed herself at a window in the apartment, while the afflicted girl proceeded to obey the commands she had received, and being soon

ready,

ready, requested permission to see Lady Georgina. This was refused; and the Duchess alone attended her to the chaise, waiting at the door until it was out of sight.

The whole of this affair had been so sudden, so totally unexpected, that the senses of our heroine were confused. She almost fancied she was in a dream; and even when convinced she was awake, and that she was really leaving the protectors and companions of her infancy—going she knew not whither, nor to whom; her ideas retained a degree of stupefaction and perplexity, which for some time rendered her feelings less poignant.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIII.

IT was not until late in the evening that they reached the place of destination; when she was conducted to the lady of the house, to whom Geraldwood presented a letter, with which she had been charged from the Duchess, at whose name the Lady redoubled her civilities, placing her visitant on a sopha, and ordering immediate refreshments; but she had no sooner perused her letter, than her whole conduct, even the tone of her voice was changed. She asked her if she had occasion for any thing, now, as it would not be long until supper. Geraldwood replied, she had taken some tea on the

the road, and required nothing further, being too much fatigued to wish for any thing but rest. The bell was rung, and a room which was named, ordered to be prepared, and to which she was shortly after conducted.

The meanness of the apartment, together with the change in the manner of the lady, proved to our heroine, that she was not to look for any great degree of respect in her present situation; and she could not conceal from herself, that the Duchess's letter had operated to produce this effect.

After a miserable, and sleepless night, she arose, and waited in her apartment, until informed by a servant that Mrs. Walton was in the breakfast-room, and desired her attendance. She descended, and was received with something like a bow of the head: and directed to pour out the coffee. She accordingly placed herself

herself at the table, where they were joined by Mr. Walton, a man forty years of age, handsome in his person, but of a very free and forward manner. He stared in the face of our heroine, until her late pale cheek wore the hue of scarlet. During breakfast, he addressed several coarse and common-place compliments to her, which served to increase her disgust and embarrassment.

The lady of the house took her repast in a kind of supercilious silence, and as soon as it was finished, desired Geraldwood to attend her in her dressing-room.

Mr. Walton said, he hoped she might first be permitted to give him another dish of tea; to which his lady only replied, with an indignant look, and left the room; while our heroine, who had risen to follow her, returned, and without sitting down, proceeded to fill his cup; but he, taking her hand, said, "Do,

sweetest

sweetest angel, sit down; and tell me in what capacity you are in this house, and what fortunate star directed you hither."

Withdrawing her hand, she replied, that she was, at present, unable to answer either of his questions; as she was, herself, in ignorance even of any good fortune which her being there could procure for herself or others.

He began a flourishing compliment, but she left the room without waiting for its conclusion, and repaired to the dressing-room of his wife, who immediately employed her in altering various articles of dress.

Unaccustomed as she had ever been to offices of this kind, even for herself, she did not hesitate to comply; but her performance falling far short of the expectations of her employer, she was abruptly told, that her wages and treatment were to be proportioned to her deserts; therefore,

fore, it would be good policy in her to labour for improvement.

"Wages!" repeated our astonished heroine.

"Yes; I conclude you will expect some, whether deserved or not," was the reply.

Tears would force their passage, which the unfeeling Mrs. Walton perceiving, said, "Come, Miss, you were not sent here to spend your time in whimpering, but in being useful; you have played at fine lady long enough—you must now get your bread; which I own, will not be quite so pleasant as figuring by the style and title of Lady John Walsingham, but will better suit your birth."

Having ended this consolatory speech; she flounced out of the room, leaving the afflicted girl at liberty to give ease to her bursting heart.

She saw that she had nothing to hope

from her former protectors—that she was not only forsaken, but degraded by them—that they had even prepossessed Mrs. Walton against her—possibly stipulated to have her made to eat the bread of mortification and humility. She vainly endeavoured to divert her thoughts, by occupying her fingers: they pursued their own course, refusing to take any part in the employment. The scenes of her past life were recalled—all had been peace, joy, and pleasantness—the future presented a reverse, too terrible to be endured. True, she was the wife of the Marquis; but might not that be her greatest misfortune? When would he acknowledge her as such?—Would he ever?

Thus did she continue to torture herself, until summoned to dinner, which passed heavily enough; the lady and her husband never addressing each other,

but

but to make some ill-natured comment, or sneering reply; and Geraldwood felt anxious for the moment, when she should return to her solitary chamber. This she was, sooner than she expected, enabled to do, by the arrival of a trunk, with cloaths from the Duke of M——'s. She sickened at the intelligence, which destroyed the last lingering hope of her being recalled, and eagerly opened it, in the certainty of finding a letter from her beloved friend; but again she was disappointed—one in the hand-writing of the Duchess alone met her eye. These were its contents:

"I am concerned to tell you, Miss "Orphan, that the Duke continues inex- "orably fixed, never more to admit you "into his house—to see, or even hear of "you; it will, therefore, be necessary, "you should call forth all your talents, "and endeavour to make yourself useful

"and

"and agreeable in your present situation, "as your future welfare must depend "upon your own good conduct. I have "sent you such articles of your wearing-"apparel, as I have thought most suited "to your present place in life; the re-"mainder, with the various ornaments in "which our folly decked you, shall be "preserved and restored to you, at such "time as his Grace shall deem you suffi-"ciently prudent, to apply them to the "only good purpose they can now an-"swer, that of providing you with "others proper for a young woman, who "has no further support than what she "must henceforth derive from the exer-"cise of her abilities.

"I am also commanded to inform "you, such letters as you may be tempt-"ed to address to any member of this "family, will be returned unopened; and "the having sent them, deemed an aggra-

"vation of your offence. Mrs. Walton "is my particular friend, and from her "report, we shall henceforth judge of "you. That it may be favourable, is the "most earnest wish of,

"Your disappointed Benefactress."

To describe the sensations of our heroine is impossible. Her bosom hove with agony—she raised her eyes, with clasped hands to Heaven—her temples throbbed, and her whole frame shook—she threw herself upon her bed, in a state of despair. "All, all is lost!" she exclaimed; "I am abandoned—an undone outcast—and I have merited all I suffer. I have repaid benefits—unheard-of benefits, with baseness and ingratitude—I have murdered the future repose of the protectors of my infancy—of my wretched, helpless infancy—and dare I to repine at their justice—at their mercy? Who am

I?—

I?—What should I have been, but for their bounty? A wandering, uninstructed beggar. And better so, than feel these torments—ignorance would have brought me content; and never having tasted better, I should have eaten my crust in peace."

She rose and paced the floor, sometimes acknowledging the justice of her patrons; at others, accusing them of caprice and cruelty.

The summons to tea, brought her to some degree of recollection. She saw the necessity of composing her mind; at least, to outward appearance; and, after a few moments, followed the mesenger; but the anguish of her mind was too visible in her countenance, to escape observation.

Mr. Walton asked her, Why she had not said that she was ill.

His wife replied, she fancied Miss Orphan's illness was of the mind; and ad-

vised her to lay by those absurd and useless ideas of pride and folly, with which her head had been turned; and learn to think and act as became her birth and expectations. So soon as tea was over, she told her she might retire for that evening, but that she should expect in the morning to see her entirely cured of all these nonsensical whimsies.

Geraldwood gladly availed herself of the permission, and spent the night in reflecting on her past happiness, and in anticipating her future misfortunes.

Towards morning she sunk into a slumber, and, on waking, found she had neglected to wind her watch. Imagining she had slept longer than was the case, she hurried on her clothes, and descended to the breakfast-room. Mr. Walton was there; she hesitated whether she could, with propriety, return, as he had risen to receive her. Before she could decide,

decide, he had shut the door, and placed a chair at the breakfast-table for her; saying, he hoped she found herself better than she had been the preceding evening. He now drew a seat close to her, and had just sat down, when Mrs. Walton entered. At sight of them she started and reddened exceedingly. To the morning compliment, she returned no other answer than what a look of haughty contempt might be supposed to convey; which was lost upon our heroine, who, not conscious of any guilt, feared not any reproof.

This day passed like the former, solemn and melancholy.

The following morning, Geraldwood arose from her uneasy pillow, with intention to walk in the grounds, and try if the air would not revive her, determined not to enter the breakfast-room, until

she knew Mrs. Walton was there, as she felt a great dislike to her husband. She had not walked far, when she was met by the very person she wished to avoid. He expressed his happiness at the meeting, and complimented her on her beauty, with a freedom to which she had been altogether unused.

Taking advantage of her treading on something, which occasioned her stumbling, he seized her hand, and putting it through his arm, held it fast in that position, saying, at the same time, "Dearest angel, are you hurt?"

Surprized, she attempted to withdraw her hand, while she indignantly said, "I am not hurt—I wish not for your assistance."

At this moment Mrs. Walton appeared, at a short distance, attentively surveying them.

"How

"How cursedly unlucky," said her husband; "there is my torment watching us; what shall we say?"

"Say, Sir!" repeated his companion; "I do not understand you—surely no justification is necessary."

They had now reached the place where Mrs. Walton had stood; but on their approach, that lady had returned to the house, and ordered her breakfast to be served in her own apartment. On hearing which, Miss Orphan retired to her's.

Several days now followed, in which she was treated with contemptuous silence on the part of Mrs. Walton, and cold formality on that of her husband; who felt himself much offended by her refusal to preside at his breakfast on the morning his wife had withdrawn herself.

In this state they were found by a neighbouring family, who came to pass the day. Company was one of the very

few things which put Mrs. Walton into good humour, and this family were particularly happy in that respect. Indeed, they were themselves all content and cheerfulness, with which delightful sensations they seldom failed to inspire those whose company they made a part of. They were greatly struck with the person and manners of Geraldwood, and included her in an invitation to dinner on the following day but one. Shortly after this, they mentioned some other friends they expected on that day, amongst whom was a family which our heroine had been in the habit of meeting while in town. She now repented having accepted the invitation, feeling it impossible she should fulfil the engagement; which, on the morning of the day appointed, she declined, on the plea of ill health; and Mr. Walton and his wife departed without her.

This

This she thought was a good opportunity to indulge herself in a walk, which she had never attempted since the morning encounter in the grounds. On her return home, after an hour's ramble, she was exceedingly surprized to observe Mr. Walton standing at a window which fronted her. Convinced that some accident had befallen the carriage, she increased her pace, and in the hall was met by Walton, who said, "For God's sake, Miss Orphan, come here."

She followed to the room he had entered in the expectation of finding his wife dead, or dying; when suddenly shutting the door, he rudely clasped her in his arms, saying, "At last, heavenly creature, we are alone; that jealous devil cannot interrupt us for these three hours; though I began to fear you would stay out until she came home."

 Her

Her indignant eye alone informed him of the displeasure which she felt; for the action had been so sudden, so very unexpected, and so repugnant to her feelings, as to deprive her of immediate utterance. Nor was it, until after the most powerful exertions, that she could disengage herself from his embrace, when she demanded whence such insolence arose; and haughtily bade him beware how he again insulted her.

She proceeded to the door—it was locked. She desired he would instantly open it. After a hearty laugh, he replied, in a ranting tone, "Or dread the vengeance of an angry woman. And what, my pretty vixen, if I should not open it, is your dire resolve? Have you got your bodkin in your pocket?—You need not use it; those beauteous angry eyes will be more fatal."

"Fool!"

"Fool!" contemptuously ejaculated Geraldwood.

He bit his lip; then approaching nearer, said, "A little more respect will suit both our situations better, Mrs. Abigail; do not suppose that you have that simpleton, Lord John Walsingham, to deal with."

This name recalled to her before humbled mind, the recollection that it was the Marchioness of L. who was thus degraded. With recovered dignity, she replied, "I would not injure him so much, Sir; he is a man of honour, and a gentleman."

"And you are an impudent young devil. But come, and give me an hundred kisses this instant, or, by Heaven, I will make you repent these airs."

"Mr. Walton, I do not fear you; dare again to repeat your insult, and I will prove to you that I am not that

friendless being, the idea of which has alone encouraged you to distress me."

Her manner confounded him—he paused a moment, and then said, "What a cursed foolish business we are making of this, when all I mean is to serve you, upon my soul. I love you to distraction—I see you are miserable with my wife, and you cannot hate her more than I do. Be guided by me, and I will place you out of her reach—you shall be as happy as a princess."

At this instant a door from an inner room opened, and Mrs. Walton entered. Stifled almost with rage, she said, "I am happy, Madam, to see you so much recovered; and you, Sir, I congratulate on having been equally fortunate in settling business of such vast importance so quickly, as to be enabled to return from W. in less time than others would have required to get there."

Bowing

Bowing low, he thanked her for the interest which she took in his concerns, which on this occasion had been fortunate beyond even her conjectures; having been saved a long and solitary ride, by a second messenger having met him on the road with countermanding orders. He then, deliberately unlocking the door, bowed respectfully to both the ladies; saying, much as he loved their society, he would not at this time intrude, as he perceived they wished to chat over the occurrences of the day, and departed, whistling.

Geraldwood, who felt that appearances were strongly against her, stood motionless, and undecided what conduct to pursue. After eyeing her for some time, Mrs. Walton said, "I feel that I have been imposed on, where I least expected it; for though the Duchess of M—— described you as an ungrateful hypocrite, she gave me every reason to suppose you were

were too artful to become an unprincipled prostitute; but she shall know that I am acquainted with your true character, until when, retire to your chamber, nor presume to quit it, until I have provided a residence more suitable for your intrigues, than that of your mistress."

"Intrigues," repeated the almost fainting Geraldwood, "with whom, Madam?"

"With my husband, wretch;" exclaimed the incensed lady.

A blush of indignation suffused the cheek, and illumined the eye of our heroine.

"He is the object of my most extreme contempt—of my confirmed aversion."

"What, weary of him already; you are a fickle lady, indeed. At this rate, the world will hardly supply lovers sufficient to gratify your taste for novelty; yet, this once, you are right, as he would soon have been heartily tired of you."

"For

"For shame, Madam; such coarseness degrades yourself more than me. I feel I am superior to it."

"Insolent wretch, quit my presence."

"I will, Madam, and your house—the universe should not bribe me to remain another day in it."

She now went to her apartment, and sat down to address the Duchess; but the recollection that her letter would not be read, prevented her proceeding. Her thoughts then turned to the Marquis; but of his address she was ignorant, his rout being to depend on contingent circumstances; of all which, at his departure, they both concluded she would be acquainted by his letters to his family: little foreseeing the events which so shortly after took place. Foiled in her second attempt, she saw no resource was left her, but to depend on her own abilities for support, until the return of the Marquis, or until

until she had learned the means of making her situation known to him.

The dread of casting herself alone, and unfriended, upon a world of which she was ignorant, at least in the capacity in which she was now to encounter it, was infinitely lessened by the anxiety which she felt to quit her present abode; and she prepared, with better spirits, to leave it, than she had felt since her entrance into it. Once resolved, she was not long before she was in readiness, and requested a conference with Mrs. Walton, to whom she determined to relate all she knew respecting her several meetings with her husband, feeling it incumbent on her to justify herself as far as was in her power, and which the gross conduct of that lady had alone prevented her doing on the evening before; but she was informed by the servant, their lady had left home, and would not return these two or three days. This did not

greatly

greatly affect Geraldwood, as she conceived leaving a letter would answer her purpose of vindication as well, and desiring the man to procure her a post-chaise, she was returning to her room, for the purpose of writing, when the house-keeper met her with the information, that by the command of her lady, she was not to go out of the house until her return; therefore, sending for a chaise was useless. To contest with servants, was as useless; therefore, after a moment spent in conquering her repugnance at seeing Mr. Walton, she desired to speak with him.

He came immediately; when she demanded, by what right she was detained in that house.

He replied, with much sang froid, None that he knew, she had his full permission to quit it when she pleased; and turning to the house-keeper, desired, that

so far from being detained, every soul might be aiding and assisting to forward her departure. Then bowing low, he inquired if she had any further commands for him. Being answered in the negative, he again bowed, wishing her an agreeable journey, and all possible happiness. She dispatched her letter for Mrs. Walton, which she left with the housekeeper, and getting into the chaise, bade adieu to the scene of her late humiliation.

She now had time for recollection. She took out her purse; it contained fifteen guineas—a small capital, wherewith to begin the world; but she was not disheartened. She had taken the road to London, as the place most likely to furnish her with employment. At the end of the first stage, she discharged her chaise; and taking a place in a stage, in that vehicle continued her journey.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIV.

THERE we will leave our heroine, while we look back upon the Walton family, whose house she had not left many hours, when the master of it likewise took his departure.

At the close of the second day, his wife returned, and to paint her fury, when informed of their absence, is impossible. She hastened to her escrutoire, and wrote the Duchess of M—— what follows:

" Your Grace will excuse my so soon
" troubling you with a second letter,
" when you know that it is occasioned by
" the elopement of your infamous late
" protegée,

" protegée, who went off with my wretch
" of a husband, the night before last.
" They took the road to London, so that
" your Grace will run the hazard of be-
" ing insulted by this most depraved wo-
" man, who will, no doubt, frequent all
" public places. Your Grace's discern-
" ment was certainly clouded by the af-
" fection which you bore this miscreant,
" or her native baseness could not have
" escaped your observation. For my
" own part, I must confess, she never de-
" ceived me. Is huddered at the first sight
" of her; nor should any other being than
" the Duchess of M——, have prevailed
" on me to admit her within my doors;
" and great as are my sufferings by this
" act of friendship, I am not without a
" consolation which pours balm into
" my wounds, arising from the hope,
" that my ruin may prove the preservation
" of the son of her, who will ever hold
" the

"the dearest place in the bleeding bosom
"of her ardently affectionate,
"And most truly devoted,
"LUCRETIA WALTON."

In justice to the Duchess of M—— we must observe, that the contents of this letter gave her infinite pain; for not all her care to retain uncontaminated the purity of her right honourable blood, had been able to subdue the affection she had felt for the hapless object of her bounty; and she bedewed her supposed fall with a tear—Yes, I am positive it was a tear.

I know it is a maxim that people of quality cannot weep; but I could bring several instances to prove the truth of the old adage, that, "there is no general rule without an exception." Having embraced this opportunity of bearing testimony to the natural feelings of my superiors, for which, perhaps, they may not feel

feel themselves much indebted to me, I shall not stop to argue with incredulity, or to produce any other instances, but continue my assertion, that the Duchess of M—— dropped a tear; which tear her daughter seeing her in the act of wiping away, concluded, at the least, that both her brothers were dead; and, trembling at the dreadful idea, exclaimed, "In the name of Heaven, Madam, whence comes that letter?"

Her Grace again wiped away a tear. The terrors of the inquirer were increased beyond all bounds; she arose, and snatching the letter, made herself mistress of its contents.

It now became her turn to be questioned by her mother what she thought. Here she was interrupted with, "Of this fabrication of lies?—That it is infamous and wicked; and that your Grace is accessary to the slander, by condemning

my poor deserted friend to the insults of a jealous termagant: and was this the asylum—and were these the protectors you boasted of? Well might you be ashamed to inform me of her residence."

Her Grace was prevented replying, by the entrance of the Earl of Belmont.

Lady Georgina was too much irritated to continue silent; and giving the Earl the letter, she desired his opinion of this malicious, hypocritical, and diabolical performance. He read it with visible emotion: he had far from approved the residence fixed on for the object of his fears; but that promised perfect security when compared with this. Of her elopement with Mr. Walton, he entertained not the smallest doubt; and, with all the eagerness of guilt, anticipated the evils which might accrue to himself, from her being exposed to public view. Her extreme beauty, he foresaw, must attract

universal

universal observation; and her extreme resemblance to her mother, he felt assured, could not pass unnoticed.

Enveloped in his own selfish considerations, he forgot that Lady Georgina expected his opinion, until her exhausted patience urged her to re-demand what he thought of Mrs. Lucretia's performance.

He shook his head, and folding the letter, returned it with a deep drawn sigh, saying, he wanted words to express the shock he had received by the knowledge of such early depravity.

This reply neither answered her Ladyship's expectations nor wishes. She at once lost her temper and politeness, averring the whole contents of the letter to be false—that all who believed it otherwise, must either be the most ignorant, or most malicious of mankind—that Miss Orphan has been basely and inhumanly treated—and that it was her decided opinion

nion, this calumny was only invented as a cover for the cruelty and injustice she had already suffered.

Argument and remonstrance were alike fruitless: nothing less than a positive disbelief of every circumstance which could cast a reflection on her friend, and her immediate recal, would be listened to. This being equally against the interest of the Duchess and the Earl, and certainly against their opinion, they could not yield; and Lady Georgina left them, solemnly protesting she would not rest either night or day, until she had discovered and redressed the injured girl.

Alarmed by her violence, and fearing she would execute her threat, they agreed it would be best to make diligent search for her themselves; and should their endeavours succeed, of which her present manner of life gave them hope, to lose no time in conveying her out of the king-

 dom.

dom. Of this business the Earl undertook the management; while her Grace retired to acquaint her sons with the unhappy deviation of their late favourite from virtue and decency; but, as she had resolved carefully to conceal from Lord John her knowledge of his attachment to the low-born object of her bounty, in the propriety of which both the Duke and Marquis had coincided, previous to the departure of the latter, she felt somewhat perplexed how to account for her removal from the house and protection of the friends of her infancy, until the probability of her being the natural daughter of their father occurring, dispelled the difficulty; and she commenced her epistle with the providential discovery she had made, just at the time their unfaithful and unjust parent was on the point of appropriating the fortune of his lawful and innocent offspring, to portion this dis-

grace

grace to his nobility. That in consequence of this, she had removed the impostor without noise or suspicion (the Duke himself being entirely ignorant of her discovery) to the care of her dear and particular friend, Mrs. Walton, whose peace had been destroyed by her reception of the ingrate. Then followed a long history of the numerous detections previous to the elopement; with many pathetic declamations on the immorality of the times; and the excess of her own feelings on the occasion.

This letter was directed to the Marquis. He opened it; and, after looking on it in silence for some time, it fell from his hand, and he sunk back in his chair. It was long before he recovered, when his almost distracted brother, inquired if he had any idea what had occasioned his illness. He pointed to the letter, which laid neglected on the floor; and,

in the deep tone of despair, said, "That has destroyed me."

Lord John hastened to learn the contents: they filled him with astonishment and concern. He lamented that they had not known their consanguinity to the fallen Geraldwood, previous to their leaving England, as their mother's rash removal of her might then have been prevented. He expressed his determination of returning privately, and using his endeavours to reclaim, by placing her beyond the reach of pecuniary distress.

The Marquis listened in silence, until unable to restrain his sorrow, he left the room; and Lord John, to divert his own uneasiness, resorted to several letters which yet remained unopened. Amongst them, one from his sister claimed his first attention. It contained every particular with which she was acquainted respecting her poor friend, as well as her positive

tive disbelief of every sentence which had been alleged against her; the whole of which she imputed to the Duchess's vexation at her refusal of Mr. Delville, who she accused of being a party concerned in the calumny; which she ascribed to his disappointed hopes. Mrs. Walton came in for a tolerable share of the opprobrium; which, in truth, had been liberally bestowed on the whole party; and, her letter concluded, by exhorting her brothers to hasten to her rescue, with the same energy they would use in the protection of a sister; for as such she should ever consider her. These expressions were dictated by the warmth of her heart, (being entirely ignorant of the supposed affinity) yet, by the brothers, they were concluded to allude to the late discovery.

Lady Georgina's absolute acquittal of her friend, removed a weight from the

 bosom

bosom of Lord John. He hurried to the apartment of the Marquis, and with joy sparkling in his eye, presented him the letter, which, after perusing, he returned with a sickly kind of pleasure, saying he was happy that the wretched girl was free from intentional guilt, and requesting he might be again left alone. Lord John looked rather sulkily at him; but recollecting his illness, retired. They met not until the evening, when the continued distress of the Marquis exceedingly provoked his brother, who now saw no reason for it. Feeling no kind of repugnance in himself, to acknowledge the little orphan as his sister, why the Marquis should, he could not conceive; unless from stupid pride, or selfish motives. He combated this idea, but no other presented itself. Every sigh from his brother irritated him, until out of all patience, he abruptly asked, "When he

would

would be ready to accompany him to England?"

The Marquis looked mournfully at him; but not immediately replying, he angrily proceeded, "What the devil is the matter with you, Charles? Is it the fear of this poor girl's depriving you of a few dirty thousands, which makes you whine and take on so? Upon my soul, I almost despise you; and am quite indifferent whether I have your company or not. Indeed, you are best where you are; for, how can I be certain that you will not join the cursed cabal which has already combined to distress her."

The Marquis looked at him with speechless astonishment, while he continued, "Aye, you may look as furious as you please, but I do not regard your displeasure. I will leave you to-morrow, and endeavour to find out my father's deserted child, with whom I will cheerfully divide

 my

my fortune, and protect her alike from the insults or assistance of the haughty and the selfish; so set your heart at rest. Poor Geraldwood shall never diminish your golden idols."

The Marquis covered his face with his hands, and wept aloud. His sorrow softened and confounded his brother. He paused in the utmost perplexity, until the Marquis rising, said, "John, you have greatly wronged, and quite unmanned me—I am unfit for society: here then let us separate. England I shall never more revisit; but go you thither, and rescue from calumny and oppression, the injured Geraldwood—I have undone her."

"Then," replied his indignant and mistaken brother; "you are a villain, and I renounce all kindred—all connection with you."

"I am a wretch," returned the Marquis;

quis; "but not the base one you conceive me—she's my wife."

Lord John dropped upon his knee, and pressing the hand of his brother hard upon his bosom, in words scarcely articulate, pronounced, "Can you forgive me?"

The Marquis clasped him in his arms, and they wept on each other's neck. When more composed, they separated for the night; and the following day it was resolved Lord John should privately return to England, while his ill-fated brother pursued the route before agreed on; in which intention we will leave them, and return to our heroine, who was left on her way to the metropolis.

 CHAP.

CHAP. XXV.

HERE she arrived without meeting a single adventure; and this I relate as a much greater novelty, and a more extraordinary anecdote, than had I told of her having been besieged by lovers, deluged by a storm, surrounded by highwaymen, or overturned in a river. These circumstances occur to every heroine, every day, and are common. I have placed mine in a point of view never seen before—a heroine, and in a stage-coach, without meeting any adventures for her historian to record. But here my wonderful must end; for on her getting into a hackney-coach, at Charing-cross, she found herself

in the same predicament, in which thousands of former heroines have found themselves—she knew not whither to direct the driver. At length pulling the check-string, she alighted at a shop, and after purchasing some small article, asked if she could be recommended to a lodging. The woman looking attentively in her face, Geraldwood guessed her meaning, and said, "You may safely comply, Madam, with my request—I shall not discredit you. I am just arrived in town, for the purpose of making an excellent education useful to me, by enabling me to earn my bread."

The woman begging her pardon, said, she had a vacant apartment herself, if she thought it good enough. Geraldwood assured her, an indifferent one would best suit her finances; and was conducted to a small, but neat chamber. Thither her trunk was conveyed; and after taking

some tea with her hostess, she passed a more contented night than she had done from the time of her being first addressed by Mr. Delville.

In the morning having dressed herself in some of the plainest of her clothes, which though the least valuable of those she possessed from the bounty of her late benefactors, were nevertheless of elegant make, and expensive quality, she descended to partake of her landlady's breakfast, to which she had been invited the night before.

After some conversation what employment she was best fitted to fill, she was accompanied by her new friend to the house of a person who engaged indigent artists, to paint various ornaments for such people of fortune, as wished to pass themselves, or their surprizing children upon their acquaintance, for proficients.

Here she was engaged, and immediately

furnished with a subject for displaying her abilities; and for which she was to be paid the usual price.

At the end of a week, she carried home her work, in which were only found a few faults, and she received fifteen shillings for her labour, which her employer, told her (though in an hour after, he sent it to one of his customers at four guineas) it was more than others of the profession would have given; but he wished to encourage young beginners. And she returned to her lodging, rather disheartened, from the certainty that her utmost diligence, would barely supply her with the necessaries of life.

Thus she proceeded for several weeks, with unremitting industry, and with nearly the same encouragement, until her health declined so visibly, as to alarm her with the fear of being unable to pursue her present occupation.

Her

Her landlady was again consulted; and it was agreed, that the place of an humble companion, or even of a waiting-maid, would suit her constitution better, than so sedentary a way of life as that she now led.

One of these situations the good woman undertook to look out for; and a few days after, Geraldwood was directed to be at an appointed hour, at a milliner's in Bond-street, who would endeavour to serve her.

Thither she went, and was told, that she had come most opportunely, as Lady Bell Fitzmorris, the lady who was in want of an attendant, was then in the fancy dress-room, and probably might speak with her herself, which would be pleasanter than being referred to a housekeeper.

Our heroine's heart felt lighter at the name, as she had dreaded meeting with

some

some of the acquaintance of her happier days; but of Lady Bell, she had no knowledge, except by name. Thus relieved, she obeyed the summons to appear before her Ladyship with some degree of hope.

At her entrance, Lady Bell, and a lady with her, were engaged in examining a new dress, and in commenting on its beauties and defects. The former, after carelessly nodding to the respectful obeisance which was made by our heroine, resumed her employment, until her companion reminded her, that the young lady waited. Then taking herself a chair, and pointing to another, with the most condescending sweetness, requested Miss Orphan to sit down, and finding her friend still occupied in examining the dress, she spoke of the coldness of the weather, urging her to draw nearer the fire.

At length Lady Bell, holding up the

dress, said, "I suppose, young woman, you are au fait at all this business."

Geraldwood replied, with diffidence, that she had not been much accustomed to such kind of work; but, she hoped, by the most persevering diligence to atone for her present deficiencies.

Many other questions then followed, concerning her capabilities; after which came the inquiry, whom she had last lived with, and how long since; and on what account she left her place.

Geraldwood coloured, and hesitated: at length replied, that she had never been out but once, and that only for a few days—that she had lately occupied her self in painting.

Here Lady Bell interrupted her, with remarking, that painting was the occupation of many ladies beside herself; yet she

she did not doubt her being a proficient in the *art*.

Her Ladyship's friend said, dryly, "My dear Bell, it will be an art particularly beneficial to you; the young lady may dedicate the whole of her abilities to you, having no occasion for them herself."

"Pish!" said her Ladyship, "I forget what I was about to say. Oh! Why did you quit your place in so short a time?"

"It did not answer my expectations, Madam."

"Neither may mine; perhaps, you are a very fine lady, and above your situation."

Our heroine "hoped, she should not be found so."

"Well, I suppose this person who did not answer your expectations, will give you a character."

Again

Again Geraldwood hesitated--then replied,-"She did not think she would."

"Then I fancy you did not answer her's;. I think I had better have nothing to do with you."

Geraldwood, who had thought the same, courtesied, and was withdrawing, when Mrs. Walton entered the room.

At sight of her late dependant she started, and choaking with passion, asked the mistress of the shop, who followed her into the room, if she admitted such wretches as that into her apartments. Then recognizing the ladies, she entreated their pardon for not observing them sooner; but declared, the sight of that infamous creature had struck her blind.

Geraldwood now felt, that to retire in silence, would be to criminate herself; she, therefore, approaching Lady Bell, told her this was the lady with whom she

had

had mentioned her having lived a few days, and who she had innocently and unintentionally offended.

Mrs. Walton giving vent to a sarcastic laugh, cried, "Listen—do but listen, dearest ladies, while I recount the innocence of this unintentional fair one. She had been two days in my house, when she commenced an intrigue with my husband, and at the end of ten, took the opportunity of my absence to decamp with him. To be sure, I had not the best of characters with her; but I was willing to try what effect good treatment would have on her, and in this manner she repaid me."

"Dear me," exclaimed Lady Bell, "I declare it is vastly shocking. Why, the wicked creature told me, that you did not answer her expectations."

"Well," returned Mrs. Walton, "I protest, I had in that the advantage of her; she more than answered mine. Nor

can

can I imagine what she did expect from me—I would have made her my companion; but if she preferred my husband, was I to blame?"

"Certainly not, certainly not," replied her Ladyship; "if ever I heard any thing so terrible in all my life. Did you, my dear?" appealing to her companion. "Why she is quite a dangerous person, a serpent in temptation, don't you think so?"

"I certainly think," replied her friend, gravely, "that from this account, she seems to be a daughter of Eve; for she has assuredly had dealings with a serpent. But ladies, as it is not the custom of an English jury to give in their verdict, until they have heard both sides of the question, so I shall reserve mine, until I have heard what the criminal has to say in her own defence. Miss Orphan, have the goodness to gratify my curiosity, by recounting what spells or sorceries the

husband

husband of this lady employed to induce you to quit her sweet society and gentle jurisdiction."

The agitated girl approached, and holding up her clasped hands, said, "Most willingly, Madam; if you will condescend to listen to an unfortunate creature, who has no friends to defend or protect her; nor any thing but her good name, of which she is on the point of being deprived, to procure her the means of subsistence."

"Compose yourself," said the lady, rising and placing her beside her; "and relate to me how you came to quit that mansion of peace, the abode of Mrs. Walton; and why you chose so sorry a companion."

She obeyed, beginning with her having disobliged her only friends (but without naming them) by declining to marry as they wished, who procured her the situation

tion she held in Mrs. Walton's family. She then related the several meetings she had had with that lady's husband—her consequent contemptuous treatment, and her own determination to brave every hardship, rather than again be exposed to the unmerited reproaches of the wife, or the still more degrading insults of the husband. That she had certainly left the house in the absence of Mrs. Walton, at which time Mr. Walton was at home; since which, she had never seen or heard of either of them until that day. To the truth of which she called Heaven to witness.

"What an invention," exclaimed Mrs. Walton. "I trust, dearest ladies, you do not believe one word of it."

"Not a syllable, upon my honour," replied Lady Bell.

"Then we differ in one respect," returned her friend; "for I implicitly be-

lieve

lieve every one which she has uttered; and, as you have declined receiving her into your family, I will take her into mine—there she will at least have no jealous wife to dread."

The highly incensed Mrs. Walton observed, "that she might find as deadly a foe in a rivalled mistress: the loss of a favoured lover would mortify the pride even of one who had several of that description in her suite."

The defender of Geraldwood, replied only with a smile; and said, "Miss Orphan, my carriage is at the door; will it be agreeable to you to accompany me home now? We can settle preliminaries on the way; or, if more convenient, it shall attend you at any time and place you shall appoint."

Our heroine, gracefully bowing, expressed her infinite gratitude for the unexampled goodness she had shewn, in affording

fording her an opportunity of proving she was not the abandoned creature she had been represented; and requested permission to return to her lodgings to bring away her apparel, and inform the worthy landlady of her unexpected good fortune; which done, she would immediately attend her; for which purpose she requested her address.

"This," presenting her card, she replied, "will inform your friend, whose protection you have accepted; but you shall take my carriage: one of these ladies will set me down, Lady Bell, or the good-natured Mrs. Walton." Turning smilingly to the latter, "say, to which of you ladies, am I to owe this favour?"

"Not to me, Madam," answered Mrs. Walton; "the protectress of a prostitute shall receive no other notice from me than an insult wherever I meet her."

"Dear Madam, that will be extremely hazardous;

hazardous; you certainly are not aware that it is an Amazon whom you would encounter; one who carries pistols in her pocket to kill a husband, or protect a lover: a perfect Joan of Arc—am I not my dear Bell?"

Lady Bell turned away to hide her confusion; and Geraldwood's objection to taking the carriage being over-ruled, she departed.

The sparring between the ladies had prevented her noticing the card which she had received: she now took it from her muff, and read, "The Countess of Belmont." This my readers may long since have foreseen; but to our heroine it was as distressful as unexpected. The Earl she was confident would recollect her: he, she also knew, was distantly related to, and much in friendship with, the Duchess of M——, and would of course inform her Grace of the residence of

her disgraced favourite; who might probably insist on her return to Mrs. Walton. Nor was this the only painful sensation which this discovery gave rise to; for she well remembered to have heard her late protectress speak with much indignation of the levity and indecorous conduct of the Countess. Might not her having chosen such an asylum, deepen the wound her character had already received from the malice of Mrs. Walton? What would the Marquis think? But she was now at the door of her lodging, and her friendly hostess hastened to learn her success, with which she was greatly delighted; speaking in the highest terms of the sweetness of temper, charity, and generosity of the Countess, to the great comfort of her auditor, who felt convinced she must have been calumniated, as nothing so good could be so imperfect.

CHAP. XXVI.

WITH a mind much relieved by this reflection, she took an affectionate leave of her hospitable friend, and was soon set down at the Earl's. She trembled, she knew not why, as she entered. Having been received by the housekeeper, she was conducted to the Countess in her dressing-room; who, after conversing with her for some time, told her, that not having any vacancy at present amongst her women, she meant she should be her companion, at such times as she had leisure from the engagements of the world, to profit by her society. Our heroine expressed her fears lest her infinite goodness

had led her to embarrass herself with a person who would be useless to her.

"Make yourself quite easy on that head," replied her Ladyship; "I shall soon convince you it is not a sinecure you have accepted, as you must almost immediately enter on one part of your employment. My old Lord has planned a tête-à-tête dinner this very day; now I am not a selfish woman, therefore, prepare to partake the delights of his conversation, both now, and as often as similar circumstances may occur. And look you, my dear girl, I have not an atom of your late friend Mrs. Walton's disposition, therefore, you may make yourself as agreeable to the old gentleman as you can; only, beware of your heart. And now as I am throwing you into the way of temptation, it is but fair I should arm you for the combat, in which, dress, as well as address, will be necessary. With

these

these words she put a folded paper into her hand, saying, "I fancy the hero of my story is come home—I must go and teach him to expect you."

Geraldwood had opened the paper, which contained two twenty pound notes; which, with every expression of gratitude, she begged to return, as not having occasion for such a sum.

"Are you rich," said the Countess, "and do not want my assistance? Or, are you, proud, and scorn it?"

"Neither, Madam, neither," replied our heroine; fervently pressing her hand to her lips; "but, it is so much!"

The Countess, laughing heartily, took one of the notes, saying, "Come, then, I will divide your burthen this time; provided I am to have the same privilege when ever you are again oppressed."

After surveying herself in the glass,

she descended, singing as she went out, "Oh! how pleasing 'tis to please."

As Geraldwood saw the door close on her still lovely form, she said to herself, "Can this woman be the slave of frailty? Forbid it, Heaven. Ah! do not suffer so fair a part of your creation, a being on whom you have been lavish of both mental and corporeal graces, to degrade herself."

She would have continued moralizing, had not the entrance of one of the Countess's women, who came to know if she should assist her in dressing, put an end to her meditation. This, however, she declined, being henceforth determined to be as independent as the nature of her situation would admit.

At the summons, she repaired to the eating-room, not without forming various conjectures as to her reception from the

the Earl. His back was to the door at which she entered; but, on the Countess's saying, "This, my Lord, is the young lady," he turned, started, and exclaimed, "God of Heaven! Am I never to be at peace? Miss Orphan!" Then regaining some degree of recollection, took his place at the table; while the agitated Geraldwood, after humbly courtesying, took her's in that pointed to by the Countess.

Her Ladyship detailed several anecdotes of the morning, with great wit and cheerfulness, but without producing the effect she intended; neither of her companions joining in the laugh. The Earl's mind evidently laboured under some heavy pressure; his answers, when spoken to, were short and confused—his brow was sullen, and his look bewildered. All this seemed to have no effect on his lady; she preserved her good humour, until the de-

parture of the attendants, then saying, "So, my Lord, you and my young friend are old acquaintance, I find."

"I have seen Miss Orphan several times," sulkily said the Earl.

"And you, Miss Orphan, have seen his Lordship several times, I suppose?"

"I have had that honour, Madam."

"Vastly well, good folks: if you were not more active in making your acquaintance, than you seem disposed to be in telling me where it commenced, it must have been a plodding business."

"I had the honour of seeing the Earl at the Duke of M——'s."

"Did you ever live there, then?"

"I did, Madam; it was her Grace who sent me to Mrs. Walton."

"Were you with her any time?"

"Yes."

"How long?"

"Nearly the whole of my life."

"And

"And she parted with you to that woman?—And can such anger dwell in heavenly breasts?"

"I offended her Grace."

"Was your crime of such a nature as not to be forgiven?"

"She deemed it such."

"May I know it?"

"I refused to marry."

The Countess laughed.

"Whom, my dear girl?"

Our heroine hesitated; at length she said, "Mr. Delville."

Her Ladyship here seemed struck as by some sudden thought; which, as suddenly rejecting, she said, "No! 'tis impossible." Then looking attentively at Geraldwood; "and yet—but no, it cannot be the orphan she adopted."

"I am the deserted offspring of misery which her bounty preserved."

"And that her disappointed pride has abandoned,"

abandoned," said the Countess. Then raising her eyes and hands, she fervently ejaculated, "Merciful God, I thank you that I am not like this woman;" but instantly feeling ashamed of her seriousness, she said, "Why, my Lord Belmont, what a tale is this? The Duchess of M—— has been in a passion! Does not this detract from her sublimity?"

"You are mistaken," gravely replied the Earl; "she has acted with her usual propriety, in support of the dignity of her house; at least, so I understand her conduct. If I have been deceived, which this young lady's story most certainly insinuates, I shall be compelled in future, to withhold a part of that implicit respect her Grace's word has hitherto commanded."

Every feeling of the grateful Geraldwood, was wounded; by this implied accusation of having dealt unfairly by her benefactress.

benefactress. She expressed the deepest regret, if what she had said, could bear the slightest construction of having reflected on the Duchess of M——, whose parental goodness to her, when abandoned by those whom nature had bound to protect her, had been such as to preclude every possibility of complaint.

"I know not," said his Lordship, "if I altogether coincide with that opinion, Madam. Benefits, however great, may be cancelled by subsequent ill treatment; nor am I sure, if my friend's dereliction of you proceeds from no other motive, than your refusal to marry Mr. Delville, whether I can entirely exculpate her from the charge of cruelty. Nay, I will add, from that of injustice."

"The Duchess of M——, my Lord," eagerly replied our heroine, "never has been cruel—she cannot be unjust."

The Earl bowed triumphantly.

 "I have

"I have merited her reprobation. Formed by her care—the creature of her bounty—I ought to have had no will—no thought, but such as she dictated; but forgetful of myself, and unmindful of my duty, I have deserved her hatred—it has crushed me, and I acknowledge the justice of my punishment."

The Countess was affected. Checking a tear, she said, "Let us say no more of this famous lady—talking of her always puts me out of humour. Come, cheer up, Miss Orphan, fortune owes you some good turns, and she will pay them; you have hitherto been hardly dealt with. First, by your abominable parents, and then, by being thrown upon that rigid piece of selfishness, whose charity, like another of her virtues, was supposed to stand upon a rock, until it was tempted; when lo, the fabric not only tottered, but fell, happily for her; at least, she

runs

runs no hazard of being deprived of her single remaining boast."

Geraldwood felt shocked at this allusion; but appearing not to understand it, said, "Of her parents she had too little knowledge to presume either to defend or condemn their conduct; yet, from the faint traces of their affection which her memory still retained, they certainly, particularly her father, had loved her; it was, therefore, impossible to suppose he had willingly abandoned a wretched being, who could not have offended. The very brutes would contradict such an idea—they protected their offspring—nature was all-powerful. We daily saw it actuate the bosoms of men, to protect their more distant relations. The grandfather, if needful, supplied the place of his son, in sheltering and rearing the objects of that son's love, and so in other degrees of consanguinity."

"It

"It is true, said the Countess, "yet we do sometimes hear of unnatural monsters, who have not only deserted, but pursued to destruction their nearest relations, and all to gratify some base unmanly passion."

"Thank Heaven," returned our heroine, "such instances, not only seldom occur, but when they do, are held up as beacons to alarm mankind. For my own unfortunate parent, who threw me on the mercy of the world, I fain would plead—yet if he was not compelled by dire necessity, his crime was great indeed—may it, (and she looked upwards in supplication) never meet with punishment here or hereafter—may he never know the pangs which his cruelty has inflicted on a bosom, that, at this moment, pants to be restored to his affection—to pluck the sting of guilt from his heart, and wipe the bitter tear of repentance from

 his

his eye." A burst of anguish choaked her further utterance.

After contemplating her fine figure, the Countess expressed a fervent wish, that the unnatural author of her sufferings had at this moment been present, when his conscience, if not entirely seared, would have shewn him how unworthy a wretch he was, and, at the same time, convinced him of the value of the gem his folly had cast away; "But," she continued, "my interesting girl, you must subdue these emotions, or they will subdue you—retire—when you are more composed, I will rejoin you."

Geraldwood obeyed; and her Ladyship demanded of the Earl, if he had not been affected by the sorrow of that sweet girl.

He groaned aloud—then starting from his seat, threw it from him with violence, and hastily left the room. The Countess was rather surprized; but as she suffered few

few things to disturb her long, she was quietly retiring, when his Lordship returned. His countenance still retained traces of the torture under which he had writhed during the foregoing conversation, nor had his voice recovered its accustomed firmness.

After apologizing for his abrupt departure, he requested she would, with as little delay as possible, discharge this young woman from her service. She looked in his face for a moment, then said, " Answer me one question.—What is the deadly offence she has committed against her infallible Grace?"

" You hear, she has refused to marry the man chosen for her by those whom she was bound by every tie to obey."

" So much I understood ; but pray, proceed."

" This she did, in order to marry one whom she had chosen for herself."

" Wonderful."

"Wonderful."

"If it should not be wonderful, I trust your Ladyship will deem it at least unpardonable, when you are informed, that the object of her choice was no less a personage than the son of her benefactors."

"Which son?"

"The Lord John Walsingham, her Grace informed me."

"Then, my Lord Belmont, I not only repeat what I before said, that it is wonderful; but I most perfectly agree with your Lordship, in deeming it unpardonable. Had it been the Marquis of L——, I could have forgiven her; but to refuse Mr. Delville on account of that little, fair, foolish-looking likeness of his insipid mother, is indeed unpardonable."

"Lady Belmont, I have not any time for arguing; I shall therefore briefly inform

form you, if principle will not compel you to discourage this girl, interest must."

"Whose interest, good Sir?"

"Mine—your own."

"I protest, your Lordship is quite enigmatical. If it is *your* interest, how can it possibly be mine?"

"Susan, you trifle with my peace; but once for all, this girl must quit my house—she is obnoxious to both the Duke and Duchess."

"But not to me."

"I am under obligations to his Grace."

"Then pay them, my Lord—Heaven forbid, I should be called upon to discharge your debts; I am sure I find trouble enough with my own."

"Lady Belmont, will you discharge this girl?"

"I will not, my Lord; and further, I beg you to understand, that Miss Orphan

is

is not my servant—she is my friend, my companion, my inseparable companion."

"What folly—you do not, cannot mean to exhibit this girl in public companies with you?"

"In public always, and in private, as often as I think her superior claims to beauty will not militate against my maturer graces.'

"And what apology can I make to her Grace for so palpable an insult?"

"None from me; for yourself, a fair one offers."

"Name it."

"That you tried, but could not prevail on me to distress this unfortunate young woman. That you tried, but could not prevent my protecting her to the utmost of my power."

"How ridiculous."

"It will, nevertheless, be true; but I have talked myself weary, so, adieu."

She

She had no sooner closed the door, than the Earl cursed her, Geraldwood, himself, and all the world—then imprecated his evil genius, which seemed to pursue him in the person of this ill-omened girl, who, his tortured imagination represented to him, as on the point of blasting his every hope. With the violence of a man writhing under the most unmerited injury, he vowed to crush for ever the innocent persecuted object of his hate; and retiring, shut himself up in his apartment, to contrive the means, to the employment of which, he was quickened by a visit from his son, Lord Felix, on the following day; who, on Miss Orphan's being presented to him by the Countess, said, "By Jove, if the lady had been twenty years older, I should have sworn it was Jane."

"For once," cried the Countess, "you have shewn some skill in likenesses, yet

yet this is too strong to do you much credit."

To the infinite disquiet of the Earl, they continued to descant on each separate feature of our heroine; sometimes agreeing in opinion, at others differing, until at length they referred to the Earl to determine whether the eye or the mouth bore the greatest resemblance; to which he replied, with affected calmness, "Partial as he was to his daughter; and lovely as he certainly thought her at that young lady's age; he was compelled by common justice to say, that Miss Orphan's face was too dazzlingly beautiful, and her person too perfectly faultless, to admit of any kind of comparison, or the smallest degree of resemblance; he, therefore, must pronounce them both mistaken."

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

GERALDWOOD would now have been as happy as the absence of the Marquis would admit, had not the great levity of manner, and imprudent conduct of the Countess, rendered her uneasy. To herself, she saw her kind and benignant—to her acquaintance, affable and unassuming—and, to her domestics, generous and indulgent; but, to her Lord, vexatious and disrespectful. Her total contempt for the opinion of the world, led her implicitly to follow her own inclinations, which were not always the most correct; nor did they always meet a candid interpretation. She was, at this period,

riod, entering her nine and thirtieth year, yet as gay and thoughtless as at sixteen. Her nights were passed in flying from one splendid scene of dissipation to another—her noon in bed; and, what she termed her mornings, that is, from two until six o'clock, in leaving cards at the doors of those whom she termed her friends; few of whom omitted any opportunity of publishing her errors, or exaggerating her vices.

Short as had been our heroine's knowledge of her Ladyship, she felt she had the power of combining sensations hitherto deemed inadmissible towards the same object. To know, and not to love her, she discovered was equally as impossible, as knowing, to respect her. After ruminating on her excessive folly, she one night retired to her apartment, when a letter on her dressing-table attracted her notice. Unable to guess where she could

have

have found a correspondent, she examined the hand-writing; but it affording her no clue, she opened and read as follows:

"Is it ignorance of, or contempt for "the world's opinion, which has placed "the young, the beautiful Marchioness "of L——, in a situation altogether im-"proper for a woman of virtue, but more "particularly so for the discarded wife of "her Grace's son? The notoriety of the "Countess of Belmont's character, nearly "renders the first impossible; yet it is "painful to believe, that a mind endow-"ed with every natural and acquired "grace, can have willingly stooped to "become the companion of vice. Be "this as it may, I shall satisfy my feel-"ings, by informing you, that the house "of Lord Belmont is the last asylum "you should have accepted; and the "society of his wife, the first you should

"have

"have avoided. For this information I "shall not make any apology; being "convinced it can, at all events, do you "no injury. If ignorance is your plea, "it will enable you to prove it, by quit-"ting so improper a situation.—If con "tempt of the world's opinion, you will "shew your disregard, by remaining "where you are."

The astonishment of Geraldwood, at finding herself addressed as the Marchioness of L——, for some moments absorbed every other idea. After many fruitless conjectures respecting the writer, she reflected on the contents of the letter. They were such as gave her infinite pain; for, though she had early seen the impropriety of her situation, she had formed no intention of removing from it. She had, indeed, resolved to decline, as much as possible, appearing abroad with

 the

the Countess; and had, hitherto, remained either wholly at home, or been seen but by very few of her Ladyship's visitors.

Amongst these she had not met a face of which she had any knowledge; yet, that she had been observed was certain; and by one whose acquaintance with her situation, qualified him to decide on the propriety, or impropriety, of her conduct, the justice of whose conclusions she could not but admit. Nor did she deliberate a moment on which path she should pursue; for, reluctant as she felt to again throw herself upon the world, the evil of remaining where she was, appeared of so much greater magnitude, as to admit of no comparison. Yet, what excuse to plead for her desertion of a woman who had received her when she was borne down by slander, and oppressed by insult; who had, forgetful of the distance between

between them, lost the name of mistress in that of friend. Her task she felt was difficult; but must be performed. Respect to herself—respect to the Marquis, demanded it; and it must not be delayed.

Thus resolved, she went to bed, with a mind too disturbed to admit of sleep; and the next day waited impatiently for the hour of being admitted to the Countess. When it arrived, she entered the room, dispirited with the errand, and the thoughts of it; and pale from want of rest.

The Earl was present. Her Ladyship, holding out her hand, said, "Geraldwood, you are not well."

Our heroine had before entertained some thoughts of pleading ill health, and a desire of changing the air, as the motive for her abrupt departure; and now, resolving to do so, accordingly said,

 "that

"that she feared her late application to drawing, with the closeness of the apartment which she had occupied, had hurt her constitution so much, that nothing but a residence of some time in the country would restore her."

"Why, then," said the Countess, "we will go to the country; for I will not have you sick. Besides, that infallible Duchess will say, the lack of her protection, or the gain of mine, has broken your heart. What say you, my Lord, are you inclined for a ramble? We will set off immediately, and I have already determined where."

Geraldwood expressed her gratitude; but observed, the season was not yet far enough advanced for her Ladyship to leave London on her own account; and even had she been serious in what she had proposed, she could not have consented to her making such a sacrifice.

"There

"There it is," returned the Countess; "give a dog a bad name, and hang him. You have heard that I am a woman of fashion, that is, a monster, destitute of the common feelings of humanity; and so conclude, that if I make a rational proposal, it must be in jest. But I am serious at present; and shall be more so, if thwarted in my first attempt at playing amiable."

Geraldwood entreated her pardon. To which she replied, that for this time she would forgive her; but cautioned her to beware, in future, how she nipped her virtues in the bud, lest, being sickly plants, they should never revive. "But," she continued, "such is the manner of all you prudent ladies, or I have been unfortunate in my very few attempts at playing amiable.

"I well remember once feeling a strange propensity to do what was termed a good

 action;

action; but not being au fait at such affairs, I thought I would consult some wiser head than my own; and, having long been deafened by the detailed virtues, and incomparable wisdom of that wonder, your and Lord Belmont's Duchess, I hied me to her, described my embryo, desiring to be informed of the best means of bringing it to maturity. When, lo! instead of instruction or encouragement, the sickliness of the bantling was ridiculed, and myself reprobated, as the cause of its mis-shapen state.

"Having endured the pelting of the pitiless storm with wonderous patience, I took leave of my embryo virtue and my scolding instructress together, nor have I ever held commune with them since. But this was not the worst; for, in my soreness, I vowed a violent death to every future pulsation, which might again expose me to the scoff of those the world conceived

to

to be incapable of error. But this has nothing to do with our journey; nor have you said, my Lord, if you would be of our party."

"I am always at your disposal," said the Earl: "but which way lays your route?"

"Northward. I have, for some time, felt an inclination to visit poor Jane. I wish, your Lordship, to see Miss Orphan and her together; I think you will then be convinced of the strong resemblance."

The Earl's countenance proclaimed, still more strongly than his words, how greatly he disapproved of the arrangement; but he argued in vain. The Countess was fixed, and so was their departure, which was to take place on the following day but one.

Geraldwood retired, admiring, and grateful, but not happy. She trembled at the consequences of her remaining un-

der the protection of a woman of whom the world thought so ill; and with whom the mother of her husband was at variance. Yet, rudely to quit her, without assigning a motive; and that at the very moment she was heaping obligations on her, and punishing herself to oblige her, was impossible.

Another restless and uneasy night succeeded; and she was determined, whatever constructions might be put upon her inquiries, to learn from the Earl when his Grace of M—— had heard from his sons.

In the course of his morning visit to his Countess, she accordingly made the inquiries she wished to have answered; and to which his Lordship replied, with much graciousness, that letters from both had been very lately received; but from what particular place he could not recollect. Nor was it material, as they were on the

the move, nor yet become stationary. They were both in good health, and the Marquis in excellent spirits; that he and Lord John seemed to have changed characters, the latter being discontented, and so anxious to return home, that his brother doubted, if he should not be compelled to finish his travels, which he wished to continue for at least two years, by himself.

During this intelligence, the varying complexion of Geraldwood, had told her informer, that his falsehoods had had the effect he wished. Observing her sigh deeply, he said with more condescension than he had ever before spoken to her, "I am fearful, young lady, I have alarmed you; but be not uneasy.—Lord John's health is perfectly good, of which I shall not be surprized should you receive early and occular demonstration; as I do not suppose you will be the very last person

he will visit on his return; and that he will, or has returned, seems amongst the fears of his parents."

Our heroine now returned to her apartment, more wretched than she had left it. The Marquis, she knew not where—the Marquis in excellent spirits—the Marquis wishing to remain abroad, for at least two years.—What could this portend, but an entire change of sentiments, respecting herself; and how was she to support this change?

The Earl and Countess being to dine from home, she spent the day alone and melancholy, brooding over the barren prospect which a deserted and unacknowledged wife presented to her view. She was interrupted in her meditation by the delivery of a letter, the contents of which were these:

"At last I have discovered you.—Will

"you

"you forgive me, if I say, where I least "wished; nay, least expected to have "found you? But I have no time for "either accusations, or, what is more ne- "cessary, explanations. Nor would such "be prudent by so uncertain a convey- "ance; therefore, if you can relinquish "the fascinating society with which you "are at present encircled, to meet a soli- "tary wanderer, who, one hour hence, "will anxiously wait your arrival near "——— turnpike, you will have the "power of being informed, and inform- "ing me of the strange events which "have placed you as an inmate in Lord "Belmont's family, and oblige me to "steal like an outlaw, through my na- "tive land. Do not let any fear for your "safety, deter you from granting this "request—I shall be your protector, "though not visible, until you reach the "place above particularized."

During the first perusal, our heroine believed this letter came from Lord John Walsingham; but, on a more deliberate examination, she was convinced the Marquis himself was the writer. Trembling with anxiety, and her heart divided between hope and fear, she hurried to her dressing-room, and tying a large straw-hat close under her chin, and wrapping herself in a pelisse, she reached the street unnoticed, even by the porter; and pursued her way unmolested, until, passing through the turnpike, a man muffled up in a great-coat, and with his hat drawn over his face, placed himself before her, and having caught her attention, laid his finger upon his lip—then turning, cautiously beckoned her to follow.

With a sensation of terror, she proceeded about a hundred yards, when she observed a post-chaise coming towards her. At that minute, the person who had hitherto

therto walked on, stopped, and seizing her in his arms, forced her into the chaise, where she was received, and forcibly detained by a man who was already in it. The circumstance had been so sudden, and so violently executed, that some minutes had passed, before astonishment would suffer her to speak; and when she did, she received no answer. The blinds being close drawn up, rendered it too dark for her to guess at the person of her companion, who persevered in the most obstinate silence, and, at length, appeared to be fallen asleep.

During several hours, they proceeded in this manner, Geraldwood wearying herself with vain conjectures, and as vain lamentations; until, after recollecting every circumstance of her life, and almost every being she had ever known, amongst these Mr. Walton presented himself to her imagination, and was immediately fixed on as the

the author of her captivity: nor did this conviction serve to tranquillize her heart. Of that gentleman's morals and temper, she had formed a most indifferent opinion; and to his person and manners, the most rooted dislike—from him she expected brutality and violence, which she prepared herself to combat, by calming her agitated spirits, and collecting her courage.

At length the carriage stopped, and her companion turning suddenly to her, said, in a hoarse voice and uncivil manner, "We are going to change horses here; therefore, I give you warning to mind how you behave yourself; for, by God, if you attempt to speak to any body, or make the least noise, I'll blow out your brains; therefore, look to it."

The door of the coach being opened, he jumped out, carrying a pistol in his hand, and desiring her to follow. On being shewn to a room, he threw down

his hat, and opened his coat, when to the astonishment of our heroine, she saw, not Mr. Walton, but a perfect stranger. For a moment she felt relieved; but her satisfaction was quickly destroyed by the ferocious countenance, and low brutal manners of him who stood before her. Calling for some brandy, he offered her a part; and on her refusal, drank the whole, to the great distress of Geraldwood, who thought he had taken sufficient to drown the senses of half a dozen men.

The horses being put to, he took his pistol, and looking significantly at her, then at it, nodded to her to precede him; which she did, looking wistfully around her for some person, to whom she might, in spite of his threats, make her situation known; but no one, except the ostler appeared.

They

They now proceeded, as they had before done; her companion sleeping most part of the time. Our heroine would fain have slept also, probable as it was, that she would require bodily, as well as mental strength, to bear her through evils which promised to be great; though of what nature she could not devise. But in vain she courted the fickle god—her very efforts appeared to drive him further from her. Chilled with cold, yet suffocated for want of air; that which the closeness of the windows did admit, being impregnated with the fumes which issued from the strong brandy, and stronger breath of her snoring guide, she became impatient, and turning an eye of discontent upon his lowering visage, in every feature of which, villain was legibly written, she exclaimed, "Oh! sleep, why are thy laws subverted? Thou wert given by the benign

benign author of nature as a blessing to his suffering children, to seal the eye of care, not of guilt—to sooth the heart wounded by sorrow, not hardened by vice; yet, mark the difference—this man's eye-lids thou hast closed, even in an act of villainy; he sleeps, calm and composed; while I, an unoffending being, worn with care, and almost weary of existence, have courted you in vain."

Here her apostrophe was interrupted by her companion, who started, and grasping his pistol, asked in an angry voice, "What's that about courting? Who are you talking to? I'll finish his courting for him, I promise you."

It was some time before Geraldwood could convince him, that it was to herself she was talking; but, on his discovering that the blinds had not been disturbed, he regained his temper; and she ventured

to

to complain of her want of air. To which he replied, they should soon change horses again; until when, she must do the best she could; but at the next stage, she was not suffered to alight.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVIII.

THUS, did they proceed, until eight o'clock the following morning, when they stopped to breakfast, to the infinite relief of our exhausted heroine, whose tortured imagination, combined with the want of air, rest, and refreshment, had subdued both her fortitude and strength.

After an hour's respite, she was reminded that it was time to depart. Without betraying any reluctance, she proceeded to the inn-yard, and seeing the master of the house, she requested he would hear what she had to say; but her companion told her, he had not time to hear her clack now, and seizing her arm,

was dragging her to the chaise, when the inn-keeper bade him desist, as he was determined to hear what the lady had to say.

"Lady," returned the other, "that's a damn'd good one; but, come, Bess, let's hear what lie you have prepared."

Geraldwood now related the circumstances which had placed her in his power, and his subsequent conduct, to all which he listened with great composure, until she finished, by entreating the landlord to rescue her; or, at the least, make her guide declare by whose commands he acted, and for what purpose she was detained, when he prevented the inn-keeper's reply by a hearty laugh. Then said,

"Aye, do, pray rescue the *lady*—i'faith you will have a fine bargain; and I fancy it would be a good job of work taken off my hands, for I shall ha summut to do with her, before I break her into her old ways.

ways. That lady, there, is my daughter, once called Bet Beetle; but now I understands as how she bees Miss Eliza, and, as landlord says, a lady. God help such ladies; poor souls, they little thinks, what they bees a coming to.—And so, because I bean't a mind to have her die in a workhouse, but to take her home to her poor old mother, and make her an honest woman again, as one may say, she's affronted, and tells all them there lies."

This was delivered in the dialect, and with all the apparent honesty and simplicity of an ignorant country farmer; and the astonished Geraldwood felt a conviction that nothing she had, or could hereafter advance, would obtain belief. She, however, determined to make one effort; but was prevented from proceeding by the innkeeper's saying, "Come, come, young woman, go along with your

your father—I am not to be made a fool of."

"No, no," replied the wretch, "that you bean't—you knows better than such as she, for all her fine silk surtout.—Rat me, if I bean't ashamed to be seen with her in that trumpery, with her wail, and such gewgaws. Oh! Bess, Bess, I shall never be happy till I see thee once more in your stuff gown, and blue apron. But come along, child, or we shall have your fine spark overtake us, and then, perhaps, he may shoot your poor father, by way of giving him satisfaction for ruining his daughter."

He now took his seat in the chaise, and was followed by our heroine, with a mind almost as desperate as her fortune.

They were scarcely out of sight of the house, when turning to her, he said, "Well, Miss, you see what all your fine speaking came to; you thought to have

have done the landlord over, but I was up to you. I hope, now you know that I am a man of parts, you won't give me any more trouble, which will be all in vain, as I am not to be out-talked, nor outwitted, neither, by a milk-faced girl."

Geraldwood turned from him with a look of contempt, and he proceeded:—"Aye, you may look as scornful as you please; but if you begin to chatter any more, I will effectually stop your mouth.—When we are better acquainted, you will know I am not to be trifled with."

This address, with the horrid countenance, and determined manner of the speaker, drove the last lingering hope from the bosom of his prisoner; who, strange to say, now sunk into a heavy sleep. Yes, she, whom sleep had fled the preceding night, though ardently en-

treated,

treated, and ere despair entirely engrossed her heart, now, when cheerless and forlorn, with nothing present to her view but anticipated horrors, slept for several hours. Thus did they continue to travel, without more than one hour's respite, through that and the following day; long after the close of which, they stopped at a house, encircled by a high brick wall. Here they alighted, and she followed her companion to a room, where he left her, saying, as he had implements with him he would soon strike a light; with which he shortly returned, enabling Geraldwood to view the wretched abode to which he had conveyed her.

The room was large and lofty—lined with dark wainscot—the windows small, and a great distance from the floor, which was nearly the colour of the wainscot, and broken in many places.—The fireplace large, and empty—the chimney-

piece

piece had been taken away—and the whole appeared to be hastening to ruin. In one corner stood an unwieldy bedstead, with tattered hangings—one chair, and a small table, compleated the furniture. Sinking on the chair, she looked around; then silently looking up to Heaven, covered her face with her hands, while she implored its protection.

Her companion now busied himself in making a fire, of which our suffering heroine stood greatly in need, the night being cold, and the room, for years uninhabited, very damp. This done, he produced some bread and cheese, with a bottle of brandy. She eat some of the bread, and took a little of the brandy in a glass of water.

I hear a host of ladies, and a host of gentlemen, too, exclaim, a heroine drink brandy! You are a famous author.—This, at least, is not plagiarism—it is all

 your

your own—it is an incident perfectly novel.—A heroine drink brandy! Shocking! say the belles.—Bravo! cry the beaux. A heroine drink brandy! Yes, even so; and what is worse, or better, she derived infinite benefit from it.

They had not long finished their repast, when Nugent, such was this man's name, departed; telling his prisoner, that was her bed; and in that box, pointing to one he had brought with him, she would find some linen. Eager to stretch her weary limbs, she examined the bed, but found it so damp, that she preferred, after airing one of the blankets, and wrapping it round her, laying down on the outside, to venturing within. After a night of fruitless conjecture, and dreadful anticipation, she arose; and was induced, through want of occupation, rather than of curiosity, to open the box, which she found to contain some household linen,

with

with several changes of apparel for herself. This provision for her wants, added to her astonishment, without diminishing her fears.

Nugent at length appeared, and throwing down some wood, told her she might light a fire, if she was disposed to have one. Then, giving her a small loaf of bread, and some milk, was leaving her, when, throwing herself upon her knees, she implored him to say how long she was to remain in that desolate place; and by whom she was detained.

In a surly voice he replied, "Look ye, Miss: as to how long, that depends on circumstances; and by whom, is a secret." And off he walked; nor did she see him again until he brought her dinner, consisting of cold meat. In the mean time, she had employed herself in airing, and arranging her bed, in which she again sought for tranquil repose; but

 her

her slumbers were short, and unrefreshing.

Thus passed a week, without any other variety, save what was occasioned by the increasing brutality of her jailor, who becoming weary of his confinement, vented his ill humour on the unoffending victim of his own villainy. Indeed, she had more than once believed the change in his temper to be the effect of liquor, which increased her uneasiness. Nor was this her only new source of discontent, for she had discovered the loss of not only the chain from her neck, which sustained the ornament we have before noticed, as having been hung there by the landlady of the inn; but also a small pocket-book, in which was the certificate of her marriage, both of which, she felt convinced, though not immediately missed, must have been taken at the time she was forced into the chaise, as she had a perfect

fect recollection of having, for a moment, felt a pressure at her throat, which led her to imagine she was about to be strangled; but which she now concluded might have been occasioned by their having in their hurry twisted the chain in taking it off.

These, and all her multiplied evils, were exceedingly aggravated by her total want of occupation. Idleness, she found, was the nurse of care; and she would readily have exchanged it for the most menial employment which could have been offered her. In this hopeless state she had dragged on life, her hourly declining health making every day more bitter than the former; when she was startled one evening by the unusual entrance of Nugent, whom, until now, she had never seen between his bringing her dinner, and the succeeding morning's breakfast. But now seating himself

on the only chair in the room, he took out his pipe, and lighting it, stammered out, that he had come to have a little chat with her; and hoped she would try to be agreeable.

She had instantly perceived he was exceedingly intoxicated, and the alarm she felt at the discovery, is easier imagined than described. Finding that she did not speak, he said, "How—damned—sulky—you—are.—Can't—you—be—a little—civil,—when you—see—I'm—inclined to be—polite?—Come,—you gipsy—and—sit—upon—my knee,—and give—me a kiss—and let's—be—friends,—for—this—is—a—damned—disagreeable place—to live—alone in;—so—I'll—live—with—you.—What!—won't—you—come?—Then I'll—come to—you;" and, rising, he staggered towards her; whilst she, impelled by terror, rushed out of the room. But the total darkness which prevailed

vailed without, and her entire ignorance which way to turn, caused her to hesitate; and, finding he was pursuing her, she drew up close to the wall, to let him pass; when, after a moment of breathless agony, she heard him fall violently down the stairs.

A little encouraged, she flew back to her apartment, and making fast the door, threw herself upon her knees to implore the protection of Heaven. Then drawing her chair close to the door, she passed the night in listening for his approach; but all was silent until late on the following day, when, after hearing several knocks at the door, she, without opening it, declared she was resolved to starve to death, sooner than be again exposed to his drunken insolence.

To which a strange voice replied, "I bean't Nugent, Miss, I bees quite sober; so take your breakfast."

After some hesitation, she ventured to admit the speaker, and saw a man whose countenance was far less ferocious than his she had been accustomed to see. He informed her Nugent had, as she supposed, fallen down stairs, and hurt one of his legs so much, as to be unable to stand; therefore, he had desired him to take his place until he was better.

He now made her fire, and seemed disposed to render her situation as much more comfortable as his power would permit. In the evening he brought her some tea; and, indeed, the whole of her treatment was improved. Besides which, he suffered her to have a window open during some part of every day.

Our heroine was truly sensible of these advantages; but she was also sensible they could not last, as they depended on the recovery of Nugent, who was every day advancing in his convalescence; she, therefore,

therefore, determined on endeavouring to profit by the indulgence of her present jailor; and, if possible, make her escape. But, lest this scheme should fail, she resolved on writing an account of her situation, and the means which led to it, to the Countess of Belmont, imploring her compassion and assistance; and, she instantly executed her project, having, under pretence of amusing herself with drawing, procured some pens, ink, and paper, from her civil attendant, determined to throw it from the window into a lane below; though, even should it reach her Ladyship, she had little to hope, as her own ignorance of what part of England she had been conveyed to, rendered it impossible for her to give any direction where she might be sought. She, however, had got up into the window, the letter in her hand, when her arm was grasped from behind; and, looking back,

 she

she beheld her indulgent jailor, who seizing the letter, said, "So, Miss, this was the drawing you wanted paper for? I did not think you would go for to tell lies, but I shall know how to deal with you another time, I warrant. So Miss, in the first place, your head may ache long enough before you look out of this window again, since you don't know when you bees well used. But let's see what sort of drawing you have put here," reading the letter, and commenting on some expressions as he read.

"Convinced of your Ladyship's humanity."—Odd so, it's to a lady; I did not expect that. "Ignorant of what part of England I am in," and so you will remain, Miss, and so will your friend, too, in spite of your fine drawing. "Your Ladyship's interference is the last hope of, your ever grateful, but wretched, Geraldwood Orphan."

Here

Here the paper dropped from his hand, whilst he stood with his eyes staring, his arms extended, and his mouth open.

Geraldwood conceiving he had received a paralytic stroke, ran, inexpressibly shocked, to his assistance; when, catching her in his arms, he pressed her to his bosom, exclaiming, "Have I found you at last? Have I found you at last?"

Our heroine, having with difficulty disengaged herself from his embrace, had flown to the extremity of the apartment, when he called out, "Come to your poor Mark, who would not hurt a hair of your head, to save his own soul."

At the well remembered name of Mark, all her fears vanished. She rushed forward, and falling into his arms, fainted on his bosom.

On her recovering, she found him weeping over her. They now, after several expressions of mutual delight, dis-

 coursed

coursed of past events. Mark pleading necessity as his excuse for abandoning her; since which, he declared, nothing had prospered with him, nor had he known one day of happiness, though he had learned that she had grown up a pretty creature, had a power of learning, and would certainly come to be a great lady. "But," he continued, "you must get from this place, it bean't fit for you; besides, Ralph Nugent expects orders every day to take you on board of ship, and then all's over between you and old England."

She entreated that he would tell her by whom they were employed.

He assured her he was wholly ignorant, being only Ralph's friend, and Ralph being a close fellow, who would not peach; but he knew it was some great man, who paid well—"for all which, he hoped to be a match for both an um." He must, therefore,

therefore, leave her now, for fear his stay should be remarked; and, before he came back, he would have turned the getting her off in his mind.

Left to herself, Geraldwood poured forth her ardent gratitude to the giver of life, for the discovery of her parent. A discovery which had, in all probability, rescued her from immediate destruction. Yet was not her heart entirely at peace: to have found the author of her being lowly born or in poverty, would not have given her a pang; but, to find him the companion of a villain, and partaker of his guilt, bore hard upon her wounded spirit, and turned her thoughts to the effects which this knowledge would have upon the Marquis. Would he not reject the offspring of infamy? Could he, ought he, to contaminate his noble blood by so base an alliance? Again she mourned

ed over the fatally precipitate hour which had made her his wife. Anxious to fly from herself, she would have again turned to her father; but, alas! he was the friend of Nugent—yet he was her father, and she would follow him through the world. Might she not reclaim him! The thought was ecstacy, and in a moment banished every other.

Thus occupied with the delightful idea of restoring to society, one of its erring members, and, at the same time, making a parent happy, she passed several hours of uninterrupted bliss; perhaps, the freest from alloy her life had ever known. Not expecting to see her father until the following morning, she laid down, and had enjoyed some hours of repose, when she was awakened by a light striking upon her eyes, and beheld Mark standing beside her bed. He bade her rise, as no time

was

was to be lost. She hastened to obey, and was shortly without the walls of her prison; he bearing with him the small trunk containing the clothes which had been provided by her unknown persecutor.

They walked near three miles, until the enfeebled constitution of our heroine could proceed no further; then stopping a return chaise, they got in, and at the end of the stage, were so fortunate as to meet another. Thus, riding or walking, as chance or necessity dictated, until the evening of the second day, when they stopped at a public house, where, being informed they might have a return chaise the next morning, they passed the night; and our heroine retired to rest with a lighter heart than she had long experienced. Every hour's acquaintance with her father increased the hopes she had formed of recalling him to the paths of rectitude.

rectitude. His vices, she felt convinced, had their origin from bad example, and want of education, not depravity of heart; and she anticipated the time when she should behold him a useful member of society, instead of its scourge.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

EARLY on the following day, they proceeded on their journey, and had just alighted at S——, where the chaise was to put up, when Mark received a violent blow upon his temple, which stretched him on the ground, and he was instantly loaded with irons, without any other explanation, than what was gained by the person who assaulted him, saying, "Ah, ha! my chap, I have got you once more? We will try if these won't cure your nimbleness."

The terror-stricken Geraldwood stood motionless, until seeing them throw him bound, bleeding, and motionless, into a

cart,

cart, and drive off, she uttered a shriek of horror, and sunk upon the earth.

In this state she was conveyed to an apartment, and means used for her recovery, but it was long before she shewed any signs of life. At length, returning recollection brought to her mind the late dreadful scene, and produced a groan of anguish; when the curtain was gently put aside, and a mild voice pronounced "Geraldwood, my poor child, how do you find yourself?"

At the sound, she started; and hastily raising her head from the pillow, she exclaimed, "Am I, indeed, mad; or, is that the voice of Doctor Mirvan?"

"It is Doctor Mirvan," replied the Doctor; for it was himself; "be calm, my poor girl, you have been very ill."

She seized his hand, and pressing it to her lips, wept aloud.

Extremely affected, he soothed her by the

the kindest expressions, and entreated her to compose herself—that he would now leave her, but would return in the morning; during which time, she must, if she wished to oblige him, tranquillize her spirits, and endeavour to rest. She promised; but the uncertainty of her father's situation (for such she still believed him to be, he, not having undeceived her; in the fear, such a discovery might deprive him of, not only her society, but affection) drove sleep from her uneasy pillow; and the Doctor, at his return, found the symptoms of fever rather increased, than diminished.

No longer able to refrain, she conjured him to tell her what they had done with her father? Imagining that she rambled, he told her he was safe, and well. She clasped her hands, fervently thanking God, for this infinite mercy; and then inquired,

inquired, if he knew why he had been so shockingly treated?

In some perplexity, the Doctor answered, that he did not; when the servant of the house, who was present, unthinkingly said, "He had been taken up for a highway-robbery, Miss, some time ago, and had given the constable the slip; so that was the reason they chained him."

"Power supreme," exclaimed Geraldwood, "look with pity on my father."—Then grasping the hand of Dr. Mirvan, "Save him, Sir," she cried. "If you have any pity for a wretched being, whose life you have preserved, whose helpless infancy you watched over; save my father."

"Tell me, Miss Orphan," asked Doctor Mirvan, "who is this man; and why do you call him father?"

"He is my father, Sir," she hastily returned, "the same that gave me to the

care

care of Lord John Walsingham. Yes, this lost, this unfortunate man, who is to fall beneath the stroke of justice, is my father."

She then proceeded to relate every material occurrence which had taken place since his leaving the Duke of M——'s with the Marquis, to all of which he listened with wonder and compassion.

He then inquired, if she had any idea, by whose power she had been so greatly injured?

She, hesitating, replied, she was unknown to any one sufficiently powerful, so greatly to oppress, even her, except the Duke of M——.

He shook his head, saying, "It is not the Duke;" and left the room apparently much disturbed.

He now recollected the various tales he had heard from the Duchess, of the depraved morals and vicious life of this unfortunate

fortunate girl; not one word of which, by her own account, could be true. And yet there was an appearance of candour in her story, many parts of which might, if false, easily be detected; which compelled his belief of her innocence, and his sister's injustice and inhumanity. Deeply pained by this idea, he resolved to have his suspicions confirmed or eradicated; and on returning to his patient, proposed her being removed to his house, which was only in the next street. To which she assented with grateful acknowledgments for the offer, and was accordingly removed.

Once more restored to civilized society, and the accommodations of elegance and comfort, Geraldwood would have enjoyed her situation, had not the recollection of her father's deplorable state, and her uncertainty respecting the Marquis, embittered all her hours. She knew it was in the

the power of Doctor Mirvan to have satisfied her on this latter subject, but she likewise saw that he avoided every conversation which could lead to any part of the Duke of M——'s family; though in other respects he appeared to make her happiness his study. But in spite of both their efforts, her health daily grew worse, until rouzed by her danger, he entreated she would confide in him, and reveal the secret sorrow, which if not shortly removed, must conduct her to the grave.

In compliance with his desire, she informed him that the fate of her father weighed heavy on her peace; of the Marquis she would have spoken, but delicacy tied her tongue. On the following morning the Doctor was absent, leaving only a message for her, desiring she would consider herself as the mistress of his house until his return, which did not take place until a week had elapsed; when he informed

informed her, that her father had escaped from the prison to which he had been committed, and that he had reason to suppose no further search would be made after him.

This was a cordial to the oppressed spirits of our drooping heroine—it reanimated her desponding heart; and, in contemplating the present good, she almost forgot every other evil.

A fortnight had now passed in comparative bliss; when her protector pleading urgent business, again left his house, saying, that his stay would not exceed a week.

This passed, and a letter arrived, with information, that he should not yet return until the end of another.

Geraldwood was disappointed, but no otherwise affected, until, on communicating the intelligence to his housekeeper, she replied, "No, poor gentleman, nor then

then neither." Alarmed lest some misfortune had befallen him, she asked her why she thought so? To which the woman answered, "Why, Ma'am, to be sure it is no business of mine; and, besides, my master may not be pleased to know I have told you; so I had better hold my tongue, seeing I shall get no good by talking; for, I dare to say, you know when you are well off, as well as another."

"I do not understand, Mrs. Moore, how I am in any wise concerned in Doctor Mirvan's absence."

"As to your not understanding me, Ma'am, I did not expect you would; but as to your being concerned in my master's running away from his comfortable home, you certainly are."

"As how, dear Mrs. Moore, I conjure you to tell me."

"Why, Ma'am, if you insist upon it, I certainly

I certainly must; but I hope you will not go to make ill-will between me and the Doctor, who have never had a wry word for going on four years."

"Be assured, I will not; he shall never know that I have spoken to you on the subject."

"Why then, Ma'am, the town's people are very much scandalized, to think a person of my master's character, should take such a person as you (I mean no offence) into his house to live with him."

"Such a person as me! Gracious God! What am I? What have I done?"

"I don't pretend to say what you have done, Miss Orphan, as my master calls you; I don't say you are a thief; though, to be sure, Who shall touch pitch, and not be defiled? is an old saying. So, people who have kept company with highwaymen, will always be suspected; and give a dog a bad name, and hang him, is another

other old saying, and that's the case with you. For people thinks as you lived with a highwayman, you can't be good for much; and, because you are young and pretty, they say you are my master's concubin. So his character is ruined; and nobody chooses to be cured by a man who keeps a concubin; and so he is gone from home, and, I dare say, not to come back in a hurry. And now you know the reason, Ma'am, why I did not walk in the fields with you yesterday; as I did not care to be seen with a person of bad character; for, tell me your company, and I will tell you who you are, is a very true saying."

She might have talked much longer without interruption, the acute agony of her companion's feelings having deprived her of the power of attending; and, fond as Mrs. Moore was of talking, she did not choose to waste her breath on folks who

did not listen. She, therefore, left Geraldwood to her meditations, in which she left her to wretchedness sufficient. Overwhelmed by this last, and, as she thought, greatest calamity; as it involved the peace and character of her humane and generous protector, she threw herself, in the anguish of despair, on a sopha; and, giving vent to the bitterness of her heart, she accused the whole world of malice and injustice. She enumerated her persecutions; all of which, she had nearly persuaded herself, were unmerited, when the recollection of her clandestine marriage with the son of her benefactor, rushed upon her mind. All the pain she probably had, or would yet give them, by stealing into their family, and destroying their hopes, with her ingratitude and meanness, stood in array before her: presenting a catalogue of offences, never to be atoned. Shuddering at the retrospect, she

she resolved to do all that now remained possible to retrieve her past errors, by instantly quitting that house, and ever more hiding herself from the knowledge of her husband, who, she doubted not, would soon lose, if he had not already lost, all remembrance of her.

With this determination she went to her apartment, and, making up a bundle of her apparel, once more took the road to London. Her heart bled at the reflection of what Dr. Mirvan's conjectures would be; but she had no alternative. To acquaint him with what she had learned from his dependant, would be cruel; and of any other reason to assign, she was destitute.

With trembling steps, and an unsettled mind, she hurried through the town, until she reached a turnpike, when a little girl belonging to the woman who kept the gate, in running after a dog, fell and

cut her face. Geraldwood's heart, ever prone to pity, had raised it in her arms, and was hushing its cries, and wiping the blood from its face, when the mothe came to take it.

Whilst thanking her for her attentior a person passing by inquired if the ma for London had gone through yet; an was answered by the woman, that it woul be an hour first. The thought struck ou heroine of waiting for it; and, on tellin her intentions, she was invited into th gate-house until it arrived.

Here she examined her purse, whicl she rejoiced had escaped in the hurry o him who had robbed her of the pocket-book, and the chain from her neck. Ir it was the note she had accepted from the Countess of Belmont, and some silver; and the mail arriving, she deemed herself fortunate in finding in it a vacant seat.

On

On reaching London, she drove to her former lodgings, and was joyfully received by her friendly hostess, who told her that a gentleman had been there three days before, to inquire for her. This exceedingly surprized her; but she was too much fatigued to worry herself with conjectures. Having gone to bed, she soon forgot her cares in a long and refreshing sleep, in which we will leave her, while we return to Dr. Mirvan.

CHAP. XXX.

THIS gentleman's absence from home had not been occasioned by the calumnies which Mrs. Moore had detailed, of which he had never heard; and for the least of all possible reasons, because they had never existed any where, but in the prolific brain of the selfish Mrs. Moore, who had beheld, with a jaundiced eye, the increasing partiality of her master for his guest. She had, indeed, heard a young gentleman of the neighbourhood laugh at the sly Doctor and his pretty wench; on which slender foundation she had raised the bugbear which had driven the destitute Geraldwood from friendship, comfort,

comfort, and almost happiness, to poverty, labour, and anxiety of mind.

From the time Dr. Mirvan had heard our heroine's story, he resolved to be satisfied as to the part his sister had taken in her persecutions, and had left the house for that purpose; but being a methodical man, he began inquiring of those whom Geraldwood had mentioned, how far the truth of what she had said might be relied on. To this end, he had been at her lodgings, and to the person who had employed her in drawing. So far all was as it should be. He next proceeded to the Earl of Belmont's. Lady Belmont, with whom his business lay, was abroad. After several days receiving the same answer, he began to despair of ever finding her at home, and was preparing to communicate his interrogatories by letter, when he heard that her Ladyship's grandmother had died that morning; and, thinking

thinking it possible, as he understood she had always protested her to be the pleasantest old woman that ever existed, that one day might be sacrificed to her memory, by refraining from company, he was determined to hazard another inquiry.

She was at home; and he sent up his card, with a request to be admitted for five minutes, on very particular business. Her Ladyship was lolling upon a sopha, in all the listlessness of ennui. Lord Belmont, profiting by the death of the old lady, was enjoying the novelty of his wife's society. The message was delivered, when the Countess, hastily rising, said, "Oh! most certainly—shew the gentleman up." Then, looking at the card, cried, "Pish!—what can this quiz of a doctor want with me?"

The Earl, on seeing the name, said, "Stop, John.—I entreat you, Lady Belmont,

mont, not to admit him—he is the most formal, prying man upon earth."

"Is he so very disagreeable?" asked her Ladyship.—"I think he must be quite a character."

"A very unpleasant one," returned the Earl. "I dislike him more than any man living."

"Shew Doctor Mirvan up," said her Ladyship.

On his entering the room, the Earl advanced to receive him; taking his hand with great warmth, at the same time, declaring how happy and honoured he felt himself by the visit.

Compliments being over, Doctor Mirvan said, he had been informed her Ladyship had given her protection, some little time back, to a young woman of the name of Orphan. Was his information just?

She bowed her assent.

"Will your Ladyship have the goodness to say what induced you to patronize her?—And whether her conduct during her residence with you, was satisfactory?—As also what were your motives for parting with her?—Or if she left you with your knowledge?"

The Countess, who had from the first mention of Geraldwood, conceived the Doctor to be merely an instrument of the Duchess of M——, whose malice, she knew, still pursued that unfortunate girl, determined not to sastify his inquiries, and coldly replied, that her spirits would not suffice at present to answer so long a catechism; she must, therefore, decline entering on the subject.

Doctor Mirvan appeared hurt; and the Earl hastened to apologize for her Ladyship's depression. He believed he could satisfy him on the points which he had mentioned.

"The

"The sole inducement the Countess had to take Miss Orphan, was the feeling of a heart, which could never yet listen to a tale of distress without granting the prayer of its petition. Miss Orphan was artful—she pleaded—the Countess was credulous—and had been deceived. If the most amiable propensities of the human heart could deserve censure, he feared that her Ladyship, in this instance, would be found vulnerable, as she had certainly been forewarned of the singular depravity of that unprincipled young woman; who, after having been received, and treated with the attention and indulgence of a sister, had left her beneficent protectress in the most infamous—not to say, ungrateful manner. That the Countess's indiscretion in receiving her, would be severely descanted on by those who knew not the tenderness of her disposition, he had no doubt; but well acquainted with

with it as he was, he felt prepared, if not to defend, at least to excuse her error, of which she sincerely repented."

The Countess, who had, during his Lordship's oration, risen gradually from the very easy position in which she has been described, with her eyes fixed stedfastly on his face, now burst into a laugh, crying, "Bravo! my Lord.—Encore!—encore! Why, this is excellent!" While Doctor Mirvan, unable to conceal the pain his Lordship's information had given him, arose from his seat, saying, "Unhappy girl!—I wish I had never known you."

His emotion attracted her Ladyship's attention, and a tear glistening in his eye, led her to suppose she might have been mistaken in the purport of his visit. Turning to him, she said, "You seem, Sir, interested in the fate of Miss Orphan."

He replied, that he had been; but, after what he had just heard, he must abandon her.

"I am not, Doctor Mirvan," returned the Countess, "so great an orator as the Earl of Belmont; yet, as truth, I have heard, requires not the graces of fiction, I will entreat your attention, while I solemnly declare, that as I know Miss Orphan to be one of the most amiable, so I believe her to be one of the most virtuous, innocent, and oppressed, of human beings.—That I never did, nor ever shall, repent of the trifling kindness I had it in my power to shew her—that I thought far less highly of her when I offered her my protection, than I do at this moment—and that I believe her quitting me in the clandestine manner she did, arose from the rectitude and generosity of her heart; having been led to suppose that I was an improper companion for her, and

feeling

feeling too much gratitude for the slender services I had done her, to wound me with the harsh detail she had received of my character, and principles."

Seeing amazement painted in the countenances of her auditors, she proceeded: "To prove what I have asserted, here is part of a letter received by Miss Orphan, while under my protection; and which the impertinent curiosity of one of my women secretly took from the fire, where it had been thrown by that young lady.— The former part being consumed, I can only guess what were its contents, by those which followed. Read it, Sir, and judge, if I am not justified in my opinion."

Doctor Mirvan did as desired.

"——— The notoriety of the Coun-
"tess of Belmont's character, nearly ren-
"ders the first impossible; yet it is pain-

"ful to believe, that a mind endowed "with every natural and acquired grace, "can have willingly stooped to become "the companion of vice. Be this as it "may, I shall satisfy my feelings by in-"forming you, that the house of Lord "Belmont is the last asylum you should "have accepted; and the society of his "wife, the first you should have avoided. "For this information I shall not make "any apology, being convinced it can, "at all events, do you no injury. If "ignorance is your plea, it will enable "you to prove it, by quitting so impro-"per a situation. If contempt of the opi-"nion of the world, you will shew your "disregard by remaining where you are."

To paint the confusion of the Earl, during the reading of this letter, is impossible. Doctor Mirvan, imputing his agitation to the infamous attacks on his Countess's

Countess's character, participated in his indignation. Returning the paper to her Ladyship, he said, "Generous, noble-minded Lady Belmont, your defence of this friendless unfortunate, is sufficient to confute a host of such slanderers; they cannot harm you—you are superior ——"

"For Heaven's sake," interrupted the Countess, "spare *your* commendations. The first course, served up by my Lord, consisted of such substantial food, and was given with such hospitable profusion, as to deprive me of all appetite for a second."

"I must," returned the doctor, "express my admiration."

"Positively, then," she cried, "you shall reserve it for my desert; at present, I should feel as if your treat had been ill-bestowed; and as if I had tricked you out of it."

"I mean

"I mean it as your desert, Lady Belmont," replied Doctor Mirvan.

"Then," said her Ladyship, "it must be very light; a little, frothed up nothing, just to whet the appetite, without oppressing the powers of digestion."

"I am happy, Madam," he returned, "to discover that your taste suits with my abilities; which, I feel, can furnish nothing on this occasion worthy your acceptance, or adequate to my wishes."

He now withdrew, after having received her Ladyship's repeated assurance of her high opinion of Miss Orphan's rectitude of principles and conduct; with the earnest desire she felt to be instrumental to her happiness.

The shock which the Earl had received, in thus beholding one of his base contrivances brought to defeat another, for that he had been the correspondent of Geraldwood,

Geraldwood, our readers will not need to be informed, was, as usual, the prelude to a new contrivance. He had been some time acquainted with her having escaped from his power; and this visit from Doctor Mirvan, he feared, might lead to her appearance in the world, should that gentleman obtain any knowledge of her, which was, indeed, unlikely. But at any rate, she would be safest in his own keeping, where he resolved she should shortly be, unless the fates had conspired to oppose him.

To be more at liberty to pursue his devices, he wished to get the Countess out of town; in which he was powerfully assisted, though not exactly in the manner he wished.

Wearied out by the repeated visits of a sturdy creditor, he gave him a draft on his banker, who refused to honour the

demand,

demand, expressing his astonishment it had ever been made, as his Lordship well knew it would not be accepted.

On the same day, his steward had entreated to resign his office, as he could no longer endure the continual complaints of his Lordship's trades-people and servants; the former of whom had refused any further credit, and the latter any further service. In this situation, the Earl's thoughts reverted to the fortune setled on Lady Jane, and her first child; but his lawyer convinced him, that even the consent of Lady Jane to his having it, would signify nothing, unless they could prove the death of her daughter.

At the mention of proving this child's death, the Earl's whole frame was shaken; and itwas perhaps fortunate for our heroine, that she was not then in his power. Driven to desperation, he returned home,

and

and informed the Countess of the necessity there was for his immediate retreat, until, by consulting with Mr. Alderman Twaddle, he should be enabled to arrange his affairs. To his great surprize, she made but few objections, provided their visit might be made to Lady Felix, and her long neglected friend Jane.

They accordingly a fortnight after, reached Beech-Grove, where they received a hearty welcome from the former, and an affecting one from the latter of these ladies; whose woe-worn face, emaciated form, and unsettled mind, presented an object at once so interesting and distressful, that even the hard heart of her father felt a momentary compunction, while the Countess experienced a sensation bordering upon horror.

Hastily dropping the cold death-like hand of her friend, she retreated, as if terrified by a spectre. Then bursting into

an

an hysteric laugh, while tears trickled down her cheeks, she said, "My dear Jane, how you are altered." The sufferer slowly shook her head, and pressed her hand upon her forehead.

Lady Felix, who had been all bustle and confusion, from the entrance of their guests, nevertheless, heard this remark; and not thinking it well timed, called out, "Lord help us, what news you tell; why, we could have told you as much of your Ladyship's own pretty face—you are every crum of twenty years older than when we saw you last, I assure you; and Lord Belmont is something the worse for wear, too; but that's no wonder, for we are none of us so young as we was."

The Countess was shocked at this reply, but more so by the effect which she saw her conduct had produced on her melancholy friend.

Dinner was now announced, where

pigs,

pigs, hams, fowls, turkeys, veal, and rabbits, all the produce of Lady Felix's own notability, seemed on the point of jostling each other out of their places, had not the well-wedged-in dishes of pies, puddings, and vegetables, served to keep them in their respective stations. The cloth had scarcely been removed, when Lady Felix, who would have thought her friends neglected, had she suffered them either to remain inactive, or to choose their own amusements, proposed a walk round the barn-yard, their objections to which were over-ruled by her Ladyship, who assured them they would be quite dull, if they sat poking in the house; besides, it would give them a stomach for their supper.

Subdued by such arguments, they followed her lead, and never was the exhibitor of St. Paul's, or the curiosities of the Tower, better qualified, or more diligent in

in performing their office; and those worthy gentlemen render themselves about as inteligent to their auditors, as Lady Felix was to her's; for, although the size of her hogs when they were styed—the number of stone which they had increased—the particular brood of her poultry—the prolific nature of her rabbits—and the age of her calves, were distinctly and minutely detailed, not a soul of her party could have satisfied an inquisitive traveller as to any one of the facts which she had so laboriously related.

Having gone through this part of her family, she wished them to visit her cows; but feared it was too dark to observe their extreme beauty. The Countess, who had been a delighted observer of her Lord's expressive derangement from the commencement of the exhibition, declared she was impatient to behold those belles of the brute species; and thought there

was yet light sufficient. Lady Felix stood divided between justice to her cows, and the wish not to disappoint her guests; for she concluded that the Earl was equally anxious; but he, unable longer to conceal his vexation, said they were at perfect liberty to finish their beastly visit, but he should not accompany them one step further. Their hostess, therefore, proposed postponing the introduction to the cows to the following morning, when she promised to be ready to attend them by six o'clock, as it would not be light much sooner.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXXI.

THE Earl's grand view in this visit to his daughter-in-law, whom he detested, was to prevail on Lady Jane (who it may be remembered had withdrawn from London, to live in seclusion and retirement at Beech-Grove with Lady Felix) to certify the death of her child, and put him in possession of this long-wished for fortune, to which alone he looked for the support of his present expensive establishment, and for the continuance of that homage, to which he felt he had not any other claim.

To obtain this end, he entreated the suffering lady with much shew of affection,

tion, at the same time wearing the appearance of a man overwhelmed with care. This conduct was not lost upon his hapless daughter, whose sensibility, though greatly deadened to her own affliction, was yet keenly alive to that of her father; but fearful of probing, without being able to heal the wound his peace had sustained, she forbore to notice his distress; and thus compelled him, unquestioned, to relate his own sad tale of unsought expences, dreadful losses, and villainous lawyers. His sympathizing auditor dropped a tear to the misfortunes of her father, and deemed herself doubly ill-fated, in discovering that the sacrifice which she had made of her earthly happiness, had not procured him more durable advantages.

Finding that she lamented, without promising to relieve his embarrassments, he plainly told her, that the power to make

him

him happy, rested alone with her, and in what that power consisted. But with a resolution which he had little expected, she refused to deprive her already deeply injured offspring, if indeed it lived, of the only benefit it could ever derive from her.

The entrance of Lady Felix, who instantly discovered by the bewildered look, and agitated manner of Lady Jane, that her lost child had been the subject of her conversation, pettishly told the Earl, that she wished he had staid in Lunnun, if he couldn't be more prudenter, and leading her friend away, left him to plan other schemes to accomplish his ends. This he was not long in doing, and the result was, on his next conversation, to inform his daughter, that the child, whose uncertain fate she had so long lamented, perished in early infancy; of which, if she required any other testimony, he could easily

easily produce Geraldwood's late jailor, as having been present at the moment. If this failed, which he thought very improbable, he resolved to prevail with Joseph Twaddle, which he knew would not be at all difficult, to prove his wife insane; when the fortune would, he hoped, be at least given to his management during her life, which he felt assured, could not be of long continuance.

What a pity it was, that the diligence of Lady Felix should prevent this tender father from reciting those admirably pathetic speeches, which he had studied upon this interesting occasion; but so it was. Her Ladyship's bustling disposition kept her in such perpetual motion, that although she was seldom long in one place, her returns were so rapid and so abrupt, that by the time his Lordship had thrown the proper degree of wretchedness into his countenance, and assumed the

undecided

undecided air of reluctant necessity, her suddenly bouncing into the room, rendered them of no avail.

Thus, several days literally *crept* on; for, to the Earl, each appeared a month—the continual melancholy of his daughter wearied him—the yawning indifference of his wife, who preferred to his, even the society which Lady Felix's farm-yard afforded, angered—and the vulgar familiarity of that lady disgusted him, insomuch, that he began to think one more week of such purgatory, was beyond his fortitude to support; and he resolved to desire a conference with his daughter, on a matter of consequence, and sought her for that purpose; but meeting the three ladies going on a walk, as Lady Felix told him, and that he might go with them, or stay at home, as he liked, he preferred the former, and they pro-

 ceeded

ceeded to the garden, to see how the workmen went on.

They had not proceeded far, when the very harmonious voice of one of the labourers, who was singing at his work, arrested their attention. They were all pleased; but Lady Jane appeared uncommonly affected. The song ceased, and they were proceeding forward, when a second was began; and, though they were not very near, they distinctly heard these words:

" My rum is out, my spirits die,
" My mother gave me all her store;
" The tears that left her aged eye,
" Fall on the beach I hail no more.

" Jemmy," she said, " grey is my hair;
" Expect no more my form to see;
" Thy little sisters claim thy care—
" Give them the love thou ow'st to me.

" And

"And tho' three thousand miles apart;
"And tho' my aged mother sleep,
"My sisters still shall have my heart,
"The world shall never make them weep."

The increasing agitation of Lady Jane had been noticed by her companions: it now appeared as if every faculty of her soul was absorbed in the single one of listening. Her eyes were wildly fixed on vacancy—her features were enlarged, and her whole frame shook with convulsive tremor. Shocked, they drew near, when the noise they made aroused her; and, starting forward, she flew with incredible velocity, and falling at the feet of him who was singing, she grasped his knees, crying in a voice rendered dreadful by horror, "Give me my child—give me my child." Nature could endure no more—she sunk lifeless on the sod.

The Countess and Lady Felix were engaged in using means for her recovery, while

while the man, after staring stupidly in her face for some time, said, as if speaking to himself, " Poor soul, she is dead again."

Lord Belmont, whose heart was ever ready to take alarm, feared something, though he knew not what; he, therefore, commanded him to retire, and keep out of the way, as the lady was mad, and fancied she knew people whom she had never seen before.

" Please your honour, my Lord," he replied, " that bean't the case now; for I knows Madam, and she knows me. Yet how she comes to be alive I can't tell, for I'll be sworn I left her stone dead, when she made me a present of my poor little baby, that was almost dead too."

This conversation had caught the ear of the Countess; who, almost fainting with surprize, called to him (for Lord Belmont had desired he would withdraw

until

until sent for) to stop, nor on any account to leave the place until the recovery of her friend, who now shewed signs of returning life.

After some moments, she looked wistfully round, and fixing her eyes on Mark, faintly articulated, " My child!"—then looking at her father, cried, " Make him tell you!"

The Earl, not appearing to attend to her desire, his Countess put such questions as she thought were likely to satisfy the wishes of her friend; to all of which Mark, addressing what he said to Lady Jane, replied with that readiness which generally indicates truth; but we shall give it in his own words:

" Why, you see, Madam, thinking you as dead as King George the Second, I took your young one to mother, who did not much like it, because she said it

was very imprudent of me to bring my base-begotten imps to her; and, when I told her the truth, she said it was all a lie. But at last she believed it, and wanted me to make as good a present as I had got, by slily dropping it at Farmer Rake's door; but I could not do it for my soul, and so I told her. And to make her take a fancy to it, I made up a story of having got it from a great lady, who was to make all our fortunes, and then she loved it dearly; and so did I, I'm sure, for it was the prettiest kitten of a thing. And so we went on very happy, until I got into a bit of a scrape, that obliged me to take to my heels; so, as I could not take the dear little soul with me, I gave her to a little boy, who was playing at foot-ball. He was a nice lad, and I thought would take care of her. Poor Geraldwood!——".

"Geraldwood!"

"Geraldwood!" exclaimed the Countess. "Speak, instantly say what was her other name?"

After a short hesitation, he replied, "Why, for that matter, she had two names; but we always called her Geraldwood, because mother said that both tired her breath."

"Do not distract me—speak, what was it?" impatiently demanded the Countess.

"Why, you must know," returned Mark, "it was a whim of my own—so I called her Geraldwood Orphan."

"Gracious God!" she cried, bursting into a passion of tears; "is it possible that the lamented daughter of my luckless Jane should have been an inmate of my house, and I not know her."

The eyes of the agonized Jane turned eagerly upon her, while she, interpreting the look, proceeded, "Yes, my long suffering friend, I know your daughter; she

she lives, is beautiful, accomplished, and good."

Lady Jane suddenly started from the bosom of Lady Felix, where she had been supported, and raising her clasped hands and eyes to Heaven, again lost all sense of being; and was in this state conveyed to the house and put to bed; while the Earl, little less agitated, retired to his apartment.

In the mean while, his Countess, who had persisted in not for a moment losing sight of Mark, now learned from him his late discovery of Geraldwood. Upon her questioning him as to the person who confined her, the cause of that confinement, and what else was to have been made of it, he answered, that "he only knew he was one of your great folks—a Lord, or summut of that sort, who is accountable to nobody, so does all the bad things he pleases. And as for the cause, he

he had not ax'd much about it; never thinking she would turn out to be his own dear little girl; but he had summut running in his head that is was to keep one of your quality sprigs from ruining himself by marrying her; to prevent which, they were going to send her beyond seas."

The poor fellow ended his detail here; and, having expressed his fears that Geraldwood was again in the hands of her enemies, retired, with a strict charge from the Countess, not to quit the house, nor to receive any directions but from her own lips.

Her Ladyship then went to the apartment of the Earl, who had that instant arisen to go in search of Mark; as, on that man's immediate removal, his only chance of safety depended. The visit of her Ladyship was, therefore, mal à prôpôs; of which, he would have instantly informed

informed her, had not the dignity of her manner, with the solemn determination of her countenance, awed him into silence.

Closing the door, and casting on him a look, which at once bespoke pity and contempt, she said in a firm but melancholy voice, "I am fortunate, my Lord, in finding you alone, as I have business for your private ear."

"But unfortunate, my love, in the time;" replied his Lordship, "as I have business which will not admit of delay."

"The only protector of your hapless grandchild," she returned, "is warned to shun you; therefore, resume your seat."

Almost unconscious that he did so, he obeyed; and, placing herself beside him, she demanded the instant restoration of the injured Geraldwood.

Unprepared for this, he started---hesitated

tated---at length, declared he did not comprehend her; but was, at the moment of her entrance, going to take such steps as were most likely to discover where that worthless young woman now was. Though he felt that, to succeed, would be only to aggravate the sorrows of his daughter: plucking the thorn of uncertainty from her bosom, and placing in its stead, a barbed arrow, which neither time nor art could extract.

"Had I come to trifle," resumed the Countess, "your studied periods, and flowery metaphors might have amused me; but in my present disposition, they will avail you nothing, and plain dealing will suit me better. My opinion of your heart, Lord Belmont, was never high; but the scene of long practised iniquity, which the discovery of this day has unveiled to my view, so far surpasses credibility, that nothing less than positive facts

facts, combined with strong circumstantial proofs, could have induced me to believe you capable of such inhumanity, such monstrous unnatural depravity, as that I come to charge you with."

Rising hastily from his seat, "What insolence is this," he exclaimed; "and what are these crimes?"

"The destruction of a daughter's peace, by tearing her from the man she loved, and compelling her to unite herself to a wretch with whom no chance of happiness was possible."

"I acknowledge that this union turned out unfortunate; but my embarrassments compelled me."

"Did they too compel you to deprive her of the only blessing, the only consolation you had left her the power to feel? Did they compel you to be the enemy of her beautiful, her unoffending daughter; to drive her from my protection, by rendering

dering me infamous and pernicious in her eyes?—Did they compel you to imprison her?—And lastly, where have they compelled you to hide the miserable victim of her relationship to you?"

To describe the agitation of the Earl is impossible. He saw, though by what means he could not imagine, that some part, if not the whole of his designs on Geraldwood, were discovered; but as he was uncertain how far the intelligence went, he determined not to betray himself. Assuming, therefore, a dignified air, he said, "That I have much to regret, in influencing Lady Jane to marry Mr. Twaddle, this aching heart too plainly tells me; but that I have in any other way contributed to her sorrows, is false. And as to your base insinuations respecting her daughter, I repeat, that I do not understand them; nor do I believe that you do yourself. At least, I think you

you are imposed on; and, to be plain, I take the whole transactions of this day to be a scheme, contrived and managed by this pretended daughter, and her rascal father, whose person I shall instantly secure; and take such other steps as may prevent my child from the shame of acknowledging an artful, abandoned woman, as her offspring."

Seeing that the Countess was attentive, he proceeded:—"For your charges of my having been an enemy to this young woman—rendering you infamous—and imprisoning her—I have already said, I know not to what you allude. Why should I be an enemy to her? I imagine you do not suppose that I knew her for what she has this day been pretended; and in what other point of view could she be of any consequence to me? I certainly was not sorry to have such a character quit my house; not that I should

have

have taken any trouble to remove her, much less by rendering you infamous and pernicious. I shall add nothing more upon this subject, than my wishes, that you, Lady Belmont, had been, since our union, as careful of your honour, as I have been of your fame, I had then been happy, and you respectable."

Her Ladyship, fixing her eyes on his, said, "Then you know nothing of Miss Orphan's present situation?"

"No, by Heavens!" returned his Lordship.

"Nor of the writer of this letter?" holding out the fragment which she had before shewn to Doctor Mirvan.

He changed colour; but, without hesitation, averred, that he did not.

"Your Lordship's want of memory is extraordinary," continued the Countess. "But, perhaps, of this you may have some small recollection," offering him the ornament

ornament worn by our heroine, from whose neck the Earl himself had taken it at the time of forcing her into the chaise.

He started, trembled, and in a faltering voice inquired, by what unjustifiable means she had obtained possession of it.

"I took it," she calmly replied, "from your Lordship's cabinet. Will you be equally explicit in informing me whence you had it? The owner prized it highly, I know; therefore, she would not give it; yet it was in your possession. That you should value it I cannot wonder—it was your late wife's; the drawing and design, as I am told, were her's, (examining it as she spoke) not, I should guess, in her happiest moments. Hope, with her anchor broke, is not an emblem of a tranquil mind; and the motto, 'Thy power is lost,' confirms the sad idea. On this side is an urn, with these three words, 'Here sorrow rests.' Good Lady

Lady Belmont, with you it did; but to your daughter, poor Jane, this bauble has been too just an emblem of her fate. It was her's, Lord Belmont—she received it from her mother, and placed it on the bosom of your grand-child—It has hitherto been the gift of anguish, and worn in pain. To heal the wounds of the wife, nothing can now be done; for the daughter, little; but, for the grand-child, much; and for yourself, something, at least, to prove that your injustice does not descend from generation to generation."

Repentance, pride, and guilt, had, during this speech, shaken the frame, and distorted the features of the Earl. More than once he was on the point of making his wife the confidant of his views upon Geraldwood, trusting to the motive, by the accomplishment of which she would be equally a gainer, with himself, for his excuse, and probably her assist-

ance; but that pride, which never could prevent his proceeding in a base or dishonourable action, here stood foremost in the combat of passions, and with no other weapon than false shame, the shame of confessing crimes he was not ashamed to commit, bore away the palm of victory—reanimating the bosom of its possessor with courage, not only to persist in the untruths already told, but to invent new ones, should they be necessary.

Thus resolved, he assumed an air of calmness, saying, he freely forgave her suspicions, as they had arisen from finding that trinket in his possession, and which he had purchased from the window of a pawn-broker's shop, the day after Miss Orphan had so abruptly left her Ladyship's service; and where he supposed her necessities had compelled her to dispose of it. His motive for so doing, he confessed, arose from a wonderful simi-

larity between it and the one she spoke of; insomuch, that he could not but suppose, that if it was not actually the same, it must have been copied from that belonging to the former Lady Belmont in a masterly manner. In either case, he could not wish but to possess it; as her Ladyship had, although too late, taught him the value of a virtuous affectionate wife.

The Countess assured him with a smile, which proved her sincerity, that she felt much delighted and gratified, by knowing she had opened his eyes to the perfection of her predecessor; and, that no efforts of her's should be wanting to render the merits of that respectable lady daily more conspicuous; though, for the present, she must return to his grand-daughter, of whose identity he could not have a shadow of doubt. She therefore hoped, as his Lordship had already proved that he had never been her secret enemy, he would,

at least, be equally anxious to appear her open friend; by reinstating her in those rights from which misfortune had too long driven her.

She waited not for a reply; but hastening to the room of Lady Jane, left him to repent, not of the mischief he had done, but of the folly which had prevented him, when he possessed the means, from rendering detection or defeat equally impossible. In this enviable situation we will leave him, while we accompany Doctor Mirvan in his benevolent endeavours to restore the fame of Geraldwood; and likewise to learn how that young lady proceeded, after the interview of the former with the Countess.

END OF VOL. III.

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